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# Tragedies And Fragments.

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*Frontispiece* -- ÆSCHYLOS: From the bust in the  
Museum of the Capitol, Rome

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## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF ÆSCHYLOS

B.C.

527 Peisistratos died.

525 Birth at Eleusis, in Attica, of Æschylos, son of Euphorion.

510 Expulsion of the Peisistratidæ. Democratic constitution of Cleisthenes.

Approximate date of incident in the legend that Æschylos was set to watch grapes as they were ripening for the vintage, and fell asleep; and lo! as he slept Dionysos appeared to him and bade him give himself to write tragedies for the great festival of the god. And when he awoke, he found himself invested with new powers of thought and utterance, and the work was as easy to him as if he had been trained to it for many years (Pausan, *Att.* i. 21, § 3).<sup>\*</sup>

500 Birth of Anaxagoras.

499 Æschylos exhibited his first tragedy, in unsuccessful competition with Pratinas and Chærilos.

\* Cf., the legend of Caedmon, "the Father of English Song."

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

B.C.

The wooden scaffolding broke beneath the crowd of spectators, and the accident led the Athenians to build their first stone theatre for the Dionysiac festivals.

Partly out of annoyance at his defeat, it is said, and partly in a spirit of adventure, Æschylos sailed for Sicily.

497 Death of Pythagoras(?).

495 Birth of Sophocles at Colonos.

491 Æschylos at Athens.

490 The Battle of Marathon. Æschylos and his brothers, Kynægeiros and Ameinias, so distinguished themselves, that the Athenians ordered their heroic deeds to be commemorated in a picture.

Death of Theognis(?).

488 Prize awarded to Simonides for an elegy on Marathon. Æschylos, piqued, it is said, at his failure in the competition, again departed to Sicily.

485 Xerxes succeeded Dareios.

484 Æschylos won, in a dramatic contest with Pratinas, Chœrilos, and Phrynichos, the first of a series of thirteen successes.

Birth of Herodotos.

480 Athens burnt by Xerxes.

Æschylos fought at Artemisium and Salamis. At Salamis his brother Ameinias lost his hand, and was awarded the prize of valour.

Sophocles led the Chorus of Victory.

Birth of Euripides.

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

B.C.

479 Æschylos at the Battle of Platæa.

477 Commencement of Athenian supremacy.

472 Æschylos carried off the first prize with *The Persians* (the first of the extant plays), which belonged to a tetralogy that included two tragedies, *Phineus* and *Glaukos*, and a satyric drama, *Prometheus the Fire-stealer*.

*The Persians* has the interest of being a contemporary record of the great sea-fight at Salamis by an eye-witness.

471 Æschylos appears to have produced this year his next tetralogy, of which *The Seven against Thebes* survives.

The play was directed against the policy of aiming at the supremacy of Athens by attacking other Greek States, and, in brief, maintained the policy of Aristides as against that of Themistocles.

Birth of Thucydides.

468 Sophocles gained his first victory in tragedy with his *Triptolemos*; Æschylos defeated.

Æschylos charged with impiety, on the ground that he had profaned the Mysteries by introducing on the stage rites known only to the initiated; tried and acquitted; departure for Syracuse.

467 Æschylos at the court of Hieron at Syracuse, where he is said to have composed dramas on local legends, such as *The Women of Ætna*.

Death of Simonides.

461 Ostracism of Kimon; ascendancy of Pericles.

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

<sup>B.C.</sup>  
460-59 Probable date of *The Suppliants*, if the play be connected with the alliance between Argos and Athens (B.C. 461), and the war with the Persian forces in Egypt, upon which the Athenians had entered as allies of the Libyan Prince Inaros. (B.C. 460.)

The date of *Prometheus Bound* has been referred to B.C. 470 on the strength of a description of *Ætna* (vv. 370-380), which is supposed to be a reference to the eruption of B.C. 477. Internal evidence, however, seems to warrant the view that *The Suppliants* and the *Prometheus Bound* were separated by only a brief interval of time.

458 *Æschylos* in Athens. He found new men and new methods; institutions, held most sacred as the safeguard of Athenian religion, were being criticised and attacked; the Court of *Areiopagos* was threatened with abolition under pretence of reform.

Production of the *Oresteian Trilogy* (or, rather, tetralogy, as in addition to the *Agamemnon*, the *Libation-bearers*, and the *Eumenides*, there was a satyric drama, *Proteus*).

This trilogy was a conservative protest, religious, social, and political, which culminated in the assertion of the divine authority of the *Areiopagos*.

Popular feeling was once more excited against the poet, who left Athens never to return, and settled at Gela, in Sicily, under the patronage of Hieron.

456 Death of *Æschylos*, aged 69.

An oracle foretold that he was to die by a

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

blow from heaven, and according to the legend, an eagle, mistaking the poet's head for a stone as he sat writing, dropped a tortoise on it to break the shell.

He was buried at Gela, and his epitaph, ascribed to himself, ran: "Beneath this stone lies Æschylos, son of Euphorion. At fertile Gela he died. Marathon can tell of his tested manhood, and the Persians who there felt his mettle."

He is said to have produced between seventy and eighty plays, of which only seven survive.





# THE PERSIANS

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

|                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ATOSSA                          | <i>Ghost of DAREIOS</i> |
| <i>Messenger</i>                | XERXES                  |
| <i>Chorus of Persian Elders</i> |                         |

*ARGUMENT.*—When Xerxes came to the throne of Persia, remembering how his father Dareios had sought to subdue the land of the Hellenes, and seeking to avenge the defeat of Datis and Artuphernes on the field of Marathon, he gathered together a mighty host of all nations under his dominion, and led them against Hellas. And at first he prospered and prevailed, crossed the Hellespont, and defeated the Spartans at Thermopylæ, and took the city of Athens, from which the greater part of its citizens had fled. But at last he and his armament met with utter overthrow at Salamis. Meanwhile Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, with her handmaids and the elders of the Persians, waited anxiously at Susa, where was the palace of the great king, for tidings of her son.

*Note.*—Within two years after the battle of Salamis, the feeling of natural exultation was met by Phrynichos in a tragedy bearing the title of *The Phænikians*, and having for its subject the defeat of Xerxes. As he had come under the displeasure of the Athenian *demos* for having brought on the stage the sufferings of their Ionian kinsmen in his *Capture of Miletos*, he was apparently anxious to regain his popularity by a "sensation" drama of another kind; and his success seems to

## THE PERSIANS

have prompted Æschylos to a like attempt five years later, B.C. 473. The Tetralogy to which the play belonged, and which gained the first prize on its representation, included the two tragedies (unconnected in subject) of *Phineus* and *Glaucos*, and the satyric drama of *Prometheus the Firestealer*.

The play has, therefore, the interest of being strictly a contemporary narrative of the battle of Salamis and its immediate consequences, by one who may himself have been present at it, and whose brother Ameinias (Herod. viii. 93) distinguished himself in it by a special act of heroism. As such, making all allowance for the influence of dramatic exigencies, and the tendency to colour history so as to meet the tastes of patriotic Athenians, it may claim, where it differs from the story told by Herodotos, to be a more trustworthy record. And it has, we must remember, the interest of being the only extant drama of its class, the only tragedy the subject of which is not taken from the cycle of heroic myths, but from the national history of the time. Far below the Oresteian Trilogy as it may seem to us as a work of art, having more the character of a spectacle than a poem, it was, we may well believe, unusually successful at the time, and it is said to have been chosen by Hiero for reproduction in Syracuse after Æschylos had settled there under his patronage.

## THE PERSIANS

SCENE. — SUSa, *in front of the palace of XERXES, the tomb of DAREIOS occupying the position of the thymele*

*Enter Chorus of Persian Elders.*

We the title bear of Faithful,<sup>1</sup>  
Friends of Persians gone to Hellas,  
Watchers left of treasure city,<sup>2</sup>  
Gold-abounding, whom, as oldest,  
Xerxes hath himself appointed,  
He, the offspring of Dareios,  
As the warders of his country.  
And about our king's returning,  
And our army's, gold-abounding,  
Over-much, and boding evil, 10  
Does my mind within me shudder  
(For our whole force, Asia's offspring,  
Now is gone), and for our young chief  
Sorely frets : nor courier cometh,  
Nor any horseman, bringing tidings  
To the city of the Persians.  
From Ecbatana departing,

<sup>1</sup> "The Faithful," or "trusty," seems to have been a special title of honour given to the veteran councillors of the king (Xenoph. *Anab.* i. 15), just as that of the "Immortals" was chosen for his body-guard (Herod. vii. 83).

<sup>2</sup> Susa was pre-eminently the treasury of the Persian kings (Herod. v. 49; Strabo, xv. p. 731), their favourite residence in spring, as Ecbatana in Media was in summer and Babylon in winter.

## THE PERSIANS

Susa, or the Kissian fortress,<sup>1</sup>  
Forth they sped upon their journey,  
Some in ships, and some on horses,  
Some on foot, still onward marching,  
In their close array presenting  
Squadrons duly armed for battle : 20  
Then Armistres, Artaphernes,  
Megabazes, and Astaspes,  
Mighty leaders of the Persians,  
Kings, and of the great King servants,<sup>1</sup>  
March, the chiefs of mighty army.  
Archers they and mounted horsemen.  
Dread to look on, fierce in battle,  
Artembares proud, on horseback, 30  
And Masistres, and Imæos,  
Archer famed, and Pharandakes,  
And the charioteer Sosthanes.  
Neilos mighty and prolific  
Sent forth others, Susikanes,  
Pegastagon, Egypt's offspring,  
And the chief of sacred Memphis ;  
Great Arsames, Ariomardos,  
Ruler of primeval Thebæ,  
And the marshmen,<sup>2</sup> and the rowers,

<sup>1</sup> Kissia was properly the name of the district in which Susa stood ; but here, and in v. 123, it is treated as if it belonged to a separate city. Throughout the play there is, indeed, a lavish use of Persian barbaric names of persons and places, without a very minute regard to historical accuracy.

<sup>2</sup> Here, as in Herodotos and Greek writers generally, the title, " the King," or " the great King," was enough. It could be understood only of the Persian. The latter name had been borne by the kings of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 28). A little later it passed into the fuller, more boastful form of " The King of kings."

<sup>3</sup> The inhabitants of the Delta of the Nile, especially those of

## THE PERSIANS

Dread, and in their number countless. 40  
 And there follow crowds of Lydians,  
 Very delicate and stately,<sup>1</sup>  
 Who the people of the mainland  
 Rule throughout—whom Mitragathes  
 And brave Arkteus, kingly chieftains,  
 Led, from Sardis, gold-abounding,  
 Riding on their many chariots,  
 Three or four a-breast their horses,  
 Sight to look upon all dreadful.  
 And the men of sacred Tmôlos<sup>2</sup>  
 Rush to place the yoke of bondage  
 On the neck of conquered Hellas. 80  
 Mardon, Tharabis, spear-anvils,<sup>3</sup>  
 And the Mysians, javelin-darting ;<sup>4</sup>  
 Babylôn too, gold-abounding,  
 Sends a mingled cloud, swept onward,

the marshy districts near the Heracleotic mouth, were famed as supplying the best and bravest soldiers of any part of Egypt.—Comp. Thucyd. i. 110.

<sup>1</sup> The epithet was applied probably by Æschylos to the Lydians properly so called, the barbaric race with whom the Hellenes had little or nothing in common. They, in dress, diet, mode of life, their distaste for the contests of the arena, seemed to the Greeks the very type of effeminacy. The Ionian Greeks, however, were brought under the same influence, and gradually acquired the same character. The suppression of the name of the Ionians in the list of the Persian forces may be noticed as characteristic. The Athenian poet would not bring before an Athenian audience the shame of their Asiatic kinsmen.

<sup>2</sup> Tmôlos, sacred as being the mythical birth-place of Dionysos.

<sup>3</sup> "Spear-anvils," *sc.*, meeting the spear of their foes as the anvils would meet it, turning its point, themselves steadfast and immovable.

<sup>4</sup> So Herodotos (vii. 74) in his account of the army of Xerxes describes the Mysians as using for their weapons those darts or "javelins" made by hardening the ends in the fire.

## THE PERSIANS

Both the troops who man the vessels,  
And the skilled and trustful bowmen ;  
And the race the sword that beareth,  
Follows from each clime of Asia,  
At the great King's dread commandment.  
These, the bloom of Persia's greatness,  
Now are gone forth to the battle ;  
And for these, their mother country,  
Asia, mourns with mighty yearning ;  
Wives and mothers faint with trembling  
Through the hours that slowly linger,  
Counting each day as it passes.

69

### STROPHE I

The king's great host, destroying cities mighty,  
Hath to the land beyond the sea passed over,  
Crossing the straits of Athamantid Helle,<sup>1</sup>  
On raft by ropes secured,  
And thrown his path, compact of many a vessel,  
As yoke upon the neck of mighty ocean.

70

### ANTISTROPHE I

Of populous Asia thus the mighty ruler  
'Gainst all the land his God-sent host directeth  
In two divisions, both by land and water,  
Trusting the chieftains stern,  
The men who drive the host to fight, relentless—  
He, sprung from gold-born race, a hero god-like.<sup>2</sup>

81

<sup>1</sup> Helle the daughter of Athamas, from whom the Hellespont took its name. For the description of the pontoons formed by boats, which were moored together with cables and finally covered with faggots, comp. Herod. vii. 36.

<sup>2</sup> "Gold-born," *sc.*, descended from Perseus, the child of Danaë.

## THE PERSIANS

### STROPHE II

Glancing with darkling look, and eyes as of ravening  
dragon,  
With many a hand, and many a ship, and Syrian chariot  
driving,<sup>1</sup>  
He upon spearmen renowned brings battle of conquering  
arrows.<sup>2</sup>

### ANTISTROPHE II

Yea, there is none so tried as, withstanding the flood  
of the mighty,  
To keep within steadfast bounds that wave of ocean  
resistless ;  
Hard to fight is the host of the Persians, the people  
stout-hearted.

### MESODE

Yet ah ! what mortal can ward the craft of the God  
all-deceiving ?  
' Who, with a nimble foot, of one leap is easily sovereign ?  
For Atè, fawning and kind, at first a mortal be-  
traying,  
Then in snares and meshes decoys him,  
Whence one who is but man in vain doth struggle to  
'scape from.

<sup>1</sup> Syrian, either in the vague sense in which it became almost synonymous with Assyrian, or else showing that Syria, properly so called, retained the fame for chariots which it had had at a period as early as the time of the Hebrew Judges (Judg. v. 3). Herodotos (vii. 140) gives an Oracle of Delphi in which the same epithet appears.

<sup>2</sup> The description, though put into the mouth of Persians, is meant to flatter Hellenic pride. The Persians and their army were for the most part light-armed troops only, barbarians equipped with javelins or bows. In the sculptures of Persepolis, as in those of Nineveh and Khorsabad, this mode of warfare is throughout the most conspicuous. They, the Hellenes, were the *hoplites*, warriors of the spear and the shield, the cuirass and the greaves.



## THE PERSIANS

### STROPHE III

For Fate of old, by the high Gods' decree,  
Prevailed, and on the Persians laid this task,

Wars with the crash of towers,  
And set the surge of horsemen in array,  
And the fierce sack that lays a city low.

110

### ANTISTROPHE III

But now they learnt to look on ocean plains,<sup>1</sup>  
The wide sea hoary with the violent blast,  
Waxing o'er confident

In cables formed of many a slender strand,  
And rare device of transport for the host.

### STROPHE IV

So now my soul is torn,  
As clad in mourning, in its sore affright,  
Ah me ! ah me ! for all the Persian host !

120

Lest soon our country learn  
That Susa's mighty fort is void of men.

### ANTISTROPHE IV

And through the Kissians' town  
Shall echo heavy thud of hands on breast.  
Woe ! woe ! when all the crowd of women speak  
'This utterance of great grief,  
And byssine robes are rent in agony.

### STROPHE V

For all the horses strong,  
And host that march on foot,

<sup>1</sup> A touch of Athenian exultation in their life as seamen. To them the sea was almost a home. They were familiar with it from childhood. To the Persians it was new and untried. They had a new lesson to learn, late in the history of the nation, late in the lives of individual soldiers.

## THE PERSIANS

Like swarm of bees, have gone with him who led      130  
The vanguard of the host.  
Crossing the sea-washed, bridge-built promontory  
That joins the shores of either continent.<sup>1</sup>

### ANTISTROPHE V

And beds with tears are wet  
In grief for husbands gone,  
And Persian wives are delicate in grief,  
Each yearning for her lord ;  
And each who sent her warrior-spouse to battle      140  
Now mourns at home in dreary solitude.  
But come, ye Persians now,  
And sitting in this ancient hall of ours,  
Let us take thought deep-counselling and wise,  
(Sore need is there of that,)  
How fareth now the great king Xerxes, he  
Who calls Dareios sire,  
Bearing the name our father bore of old ?  
Is it the archers' bow that wins the day ?  
Or does the strength prevail      150  
Of iron point that heads the spear's strong shaft ?  
But lo ! in glory like the face of gods,  
The mother of my king, my queen, appears :  
Let us do reverent homage at her feet ;  
Yea, it is meet that all  
Should speak to her with words of greeting kind.

*Enter ATOSSA in a chariot of state*

*Ghor.* O sovereign queen of Persian wives deep-zoned,  
Mother of Xerxes, reverend in thine age,

<sup>1</sup> The bridge of boats, with the embankment raised upon it, is thought of as a new headland putting out from the one shore and reaching to the other.

## THE PERSIANS

Wife of Dareios ! hail !

'Twas thine to join in wedlock with a spouse

Whom Persians owned as God,<sup>1</sup>

And of a God thou art the mother too,

Unless its ancient Fortune fails our host.

160

*Atoss.* Yes, thus I come, our gold-decked palace  
leaving,

'The bridal bower Dareios with me slept in.

Care gnaws my heart, but now I tell you plainly

A tale, my friends, which may not leave me fearless,

Lest boastful wealth should stumble at the threshold,

And with his foot o'erturn the prosperous fortune

'That great Dareios raised with Heaven's high blessing.

And twofold care untold my bosom haunteth :

We may not honour wealth that has no warriors,

Nor on the poor shines light to strength proportioned ;

Wealth without stint we have, yet for our eye we  
tremble ;

170

For as the eye of home I deem a master's presence.

Wherefore, ye Persians, aid me now in counsel ;

Trusty and old, in you lies hope of wisdom.

*Chor.* Queen of our land ! be sure thou need'st not  
utter

Or thing or word twice o'er, which power may point to ;

Thou bid'st us counsel give who fain would serve thee.

*Atoss.* Ever with many visions of the night<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stress is laid by the Hellenic poet, as in the *Agamemnon* (v. 895), and in v. 707 of this play, on the tendency of the East to give to its kings the names and the signs of homage which were due only to the Gods. The Hellenes might deify a dead hero, but not a living sovereign. On different grounds the Jews shrank, as in the stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Dareios (Dan. iii. 6), from all such acts.

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek, as in the translation, there is a change of metre, intended apparently to represent the transition from the tone of eager excitement to the ordinary level of discourse.

## THE PERSIANS

Am I encompassed, since my son went forth,  
Leading a mighty host, with aim to sack  
The land of the Ionians. But ne'er yet 180  
Have I beheld a dream so manifest  
As in the night just past. And this I'll tell thee:  
There stood by me two women in fair robes;  
And this in Persian garments was arrayed,  
And that in Dorian came before mine eyes;  
In stature both of tallest, comeliest size;  
And both of faultless beauty, sisters twain  
Of the same stock.<sup>1</sup> And they twain had their homes,  
One in the Hellenic, one in alien land.  
And these two, as I dreamt I saw, were set 190  
At variance with each other. And my son  
Learnt it, and checked and mollified their wrath,  
And yokes them to his chariot, and his collar  
He places on their necks. And one was proud  
Of that equipment,<sup>2</sup> and in harness gave.  
Her mouth obedient; but the other kicked,  
And tears the chariot's trappings with her hands,  
And rushes off uncurbed, and breaks its yoke  
Asunder. And my son falls low, and then  
His father comes, Dareios, pitying him.  
And lo! when Xerxes sees him, he his clothes 200  
Rends round his limbs. These things I say I saw  
In visions of the night; and when I rose,

<sup>1</sup> With reference either to the *mythos* that Asia and Europe were both daughters of Okeanos, or to the historical fact that the Asiatic Ionians and the Dorians of Europe were both of the same Hellenic stock. The contrast between the long flowing robes of the Asiatic women, and the short, scanty kilt-like dress of those of Sparta must be borne in mind if we would see the picture in its completeness.

<sup>2</sup> Athenian pride is flattered with the thought that they had resisted while the Ionian Greeks had submitted all too willingly to the yoke of the Barbarian.

## THE PERSIANS

And dipped my hands in fountain flowing clear,<sup>1</sup>  
I at the altar stood with hand that bore  
Sweet incense, wishing holy chrism to pour  
To the averting Gods whom thus men worship.  
And I beheld an eagle in full flight  
To Phœbos' altar-hearth ; and then, my friends, 210  
I stood, struck dumb with fear ; and next I saw  
A kite pursuing, in her wingèd course,  
And with his claws tearing the eagle's head,  
Which did nought else but crouch and yield itself.  
Such terrors it has been my lot to see,  
And yours to hear : For be ye sure, my son,  
If he succeed, will wonder-worthy prove ;  
But if he fail, still irresponsible  
He to the people, and in either case,  
He, should he but return, is sovereign still.<sup>2</sup>

*Chor.* We neither wish, O Lady, thee to frighten  
O'ermuch with what we say, nor yet encourage :  
But thou, the Gods adoring with entreaties,  
If thou hast seen aught ill, bid them avert it,  
And that all good things may receive fulfilment  
For thee, thy children, and thy friends and country. 220  
And next 'tis meet libations due to offer  
To Earth and to the dead. And ask thy husband,  
Dareios, whom thou say'st by night thou sawest,  
With kindly mood from 'neath the Earth to send thee  
Good things to light for thee and for thine offspring,  
While adverse things shall fade away in darkness.

<sup>1</sup> Lustrations of this kind, besides their general significance in cleansing from defilement, had a special force as charms to turn aside dangers threatened by foreboding dreams. Comp. Aristoph. *Frogs*, v: 1264 ; Persius, *Sat.* ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The political bearing of the passage as contrasting this characteristic of the despotism of Persia with the strict account to which all Athenian generals were subject, is, of course, unmistakable.

## THE PERSIANS

Such things do I, a self-taught seer, advise thee  
In kindly mood, and any way we reckon  
That good will come to thee from out these omens.

*Atoss.* Well, with kind heart, hast thou, as first  
expounder,  
Out of my dreams brought out a welcome meaning  
For me, and for my sons; and thy good wishes,  
May they receive fulfilment! And this also,  
As thou dost bid, we to the Gods will offer 230  
And to our friends below, when we go homeward.  
But first, my friends, I wish to hear of Athens,  
Where in the world do men report it standeth?<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* Far to the West, where sets our king the  
Sun-God.

*Atoss.* Was it this city my son wished to capture?

*Chor.* Aye, then would Hellas to our king be  
subject.

*Atoss.* And have they any multitude of soldiers?

*Chor.* A mighty host, that wrought the Medes  
much mischief.

*Atoss.* And what besides? Have they too wealth  
sufficing?

*Chor.* A fount of silver have they, their land's  
treasure.<sup>2</sup> 240

*Atoss.* Have they a host in archers' skill excelling?

*Chor.* Not so, they wield the spear and shield and  
bucklers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question, which seems to have rankled in the minds of the Athenians, is recorded as an historical fact, and put into the mouth of Dareios by Herodotos (v. 101). He had asked it on hearing that Sardis had been attacked and burnt by them.

<sup>2</sup> The words point to the silver mines of Laureion, which had been worked under Peisistratos, and of which this is the first mention in Greek literature.

<sup>3</sup> Once more the contrast between the Greek *hoplite* and the light-armed archers of the invaders is dwelt upon. The next

## THE PERSIANS

*Atoss.* What shepherd rules and lords it o'er their people?

*Chor.* Of no man are they called the slaves or subjects.

*Atoss.* How then can they sustain a foe invading?

*Chor.* So that they spoiled Dareios' goodly army.

*Atoss.* Dread news is thine for sires of those who're marching.

*Chor.* Nay, but I think thou soon wilt know the whole truth;

This running one may know is that of Persian:<sup>1</sup>

For good or evil some clear news he bringeth. 250

13196.

*Enter Messenger*

*Mess.* O cities of the whole wide land of Asia!

O soil of Persia, haven of great wealth!

How at one stroke is brought to nothingness

Our great prosperity, and all the flower

Of Persia's strength is fallen! Woe is me!

'Tis ill to be the first to bring ill news;

Yet needs must I the whole woe tell, ye Persians:

All our barbaric mighty host is lost.<sup>2</sup>

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* O piteous, piteous woe!

260

O strange and dread event!

answer of the Chorus dwells upon the deeper contrast, then prominent in the minds of all Athenians, between their democratic freedom and the despotism of Persia. Comp. Herod. v. 78.

<sup>1</sup> The system of postal communications by means of couriers which Dareios had organised had made their speed in running proverbial (Herod. vii. 97).

<sup>2</sup> With the characteristic contempt of a Greek for other races, Æschylos makes the Persians speak of themselves throughout as 'barbarians,' 'barbaric.'

## THE PERSIANS

Weep, O ye Persians, hearing this great grief!

*Mess.* Yea, all things there are ruined utterly ;  
And I myself beyond all hopes behold  
The light of day at home.

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* O'er-long doth life appear  
To me, bowed down with years,  
On hearing this unlooked-for misery.

*Mess.* And I, indeed, being present and not hearing  
The tales of others, can report, ye Persians,  
What ills were brought to pass.

### STROPHE II

*Chor.* Alas, alas ! in vain  
The many-weaponed and commingled host 270  
Went from the land of Asia to invade  
The soil divine of Hellas.

*Mess.* Full of the dead, slain foully, are the coasts  
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shore.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* Alas, alas ! sea-tossed  
The bodies of our friends, and much distained :  
Thou say'st that they are drifted to and fro  
\*In far out-floating garments.<sup>1</sup>

*Mess.* E'en so ; our bows availed not, but the host  
Has perished, conquered by the clash of ships.

### STROPHE III

*Chor.* Wail, raise a bitter cry 280  
And full of woe, for those who died in fight.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps— " On planks that floated onward,"  
or— " On land and sea far spreading."



## THE PERSIANS

How every way the Gods have wrought out ill,  
Ah me ! ah me, our army all destroyed.

*Mess.* O name of Salamis that most I loathe !  
Ah, how I groan, remembering Athens too !

### ANTISTROPHE III

*Chor.* Yea, to her enemies  
Athens may well be hateful, and our minds  
Remember how full many a Persian wife 290  
She, for no cause, made widows and bereaved.

*Atoss.* Long time I have been silent in my woe,  
Crushed down with grief ; for this calamity  
Exceeds all power to tell the woe, or ask.  
Yet still we mortals needs must bear the griefs  
The Gods send on us. Clearly tell thy tale,  
Unfolding the whole mischief, even though  
Thou groan'st at evils, who there is not dead,  
And which of our chief captains we must mourn,  
And who, being set in office o'er the host,  
Left by their death their office desolate. 300

*Mess.* Xerxes still lives and sees the light of day.

*Atoss.* To my house, then, great light thy words  
have brought,

Bright dawn of morning after murky night.

*Mess.* Artembares, the lord of myriad horse,  
On the hard flinty coasts of the Sileni  
Is now being dashed ; and valiant Dadakes,  
Captain of thousands, smitten with the spear,  
Leapt wildly from his ship. And Tenagon,  
Best of the true old Bactrians, haunts the soil  
Of Aias' isle ; Lilaïos, Arsames, 310  
And with them too Argestes, there defeated,  
Hard by the island where the doves abound,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Possibly Salamis itself, as famed for the doves which were reared there as sacred to Aphrodite, but possibly also one of the

## THE PERSIANS

Beat here and there upon the rocky shore.  
 [And from the springs of Neilos, Ægypt's stream,  
 Arkteus, Adeues, Pheresseues too,  
 These with Pharnuchos in one ship were lost ;]  
 Matallos, Chrysa-born, the captain bold  
 Of myriads, leader he of swarthy horse  
 Some thrice ten thousand strong, has fallen low,  
 His red beard, hanging all its shaggy length,  
 Deep dyed with blood, and purpled all his skin.  
 Arabian Magos, Bactrian Artames, 329  
 They perished, settlers in a land full rough.  
 [Amistris and Amphistreus, guiding well  
 The spear of many a conflict, and the noble  
 Ariomardos, leaving bitter grief  
 For Sardis ; and the Mysian Seisames.]  
 With twelve score ships and ten came Tharybis ;  
 Lyrnaean he in birth, once fair in form,  
 He lies, poor wretch, a death inglorious dying :  
 And, first in valour proved, Syennesis,  
 Kilikian satrap, who, for one man, gave  
 Most trouble to his foes, and nobly died. 330  
 Of leaders such as these I mention make,  
 And out of many evils tell but few.

*Atoss.* Woe, woe ! I hear the very worst of ills,  
 Shame to the Persians, cause of bitter wail ;  
 But tell me, going o'er the ground again,  
 How great the number of the Hellenes' navy,  
 That they presumed with Persia's armament  
 To wage their warfare in the clash of ships.

*Mess.* As far as numbers went, be sure the ships  
 Of Persia had the better, for the Hellenes 340  
 Had, as their total, ships but fifteen score,

smaller islands in the Saronic gulf, which the epithet would be enough to designate for an Athenian audience. The "coasts of the Sileni" in v. 305 are identified by scholiasts with Salamis.

## THE PERSIANS

And other ten selected as reserve.<sup>1</sup>

And Xerxes (well I know it) had a thousand  
Which he commanded—those that most excelled<sup>2</sup>  
In speed were twice five score and seven in number ;  
So stands the account. Deem'st thou our forces less  
In that encounter ? Nay, some Power above  
Destroyed our host, and pressed the balance down  
With most unequal fortune, and the Gods  
Preserve the city of the Goddess Pallas.

*Atoss.* Is the Athenians' city then unsacked ? 350

*Mess.* Their men are left, and that is bulwark strong.<sup>3</sup>

*Atoss.* Next tell me how the fight of ships began.  
Who led the attack ? Were those Hellenes the first,  
Or was't my son, exulting in his strength ?

*Mess.* The author of the mischief, O my mistress,  
Was some foul fiend or Power on evil bent ;  
For lo ! a Hellene from the Athenian host<sup>4</sup>  
Came to thy son, to Xerxes, and spake thus,  
That should the shadow of the dark night come,  
The Hellenes would not wait him, but would leap 360  
Into their rowers' benches, here and there,  
And save their lives in secret, hasty flight.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps— " And ten of these selected as reserve."

<sup>2</sup> As regards the number of the Persian ships, 1000 of average, and 207 of special swiftness. *Aeschylus* agrees with *Herodotus*, who gives the total of 1207. The latter, however, reckons the Greek ships not at 310, but 378 (vii. 89, viii. 48).

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Athens had actually been taken, and its chief buildings plundered and laid waste, was, of course, not a pleasant one for the poet to dwell on. It could hardly, however, be entirely passed over, and this is the one allusion to it. In the truest sense it was still "unsacked:" it had not lost its most effective defence, its most precious treasure.

<sup>4</sup> As the story is told by *Herodotus* (vii. 75), this was *Sikinnos*, the slave of *Themistocles*, and the stratagem was the device of that commander to save the Greeks from the disgrace and ruin of a *sauve qui peut* flight in all directions.

## THE PERSIANS

And he forthwith, this hearing, knowing not  
The Hellene's guile, nor yet the Gods' great wrath,  
Gives this command to all his admirals,  
Soon as the sun should cease to burn the earth  
With his bright rays, and darkness thick invade  
The firmament of heaven, to set their ships  
In three-fold lines, to hinder all escape,  
And guard the billowy straits, and others place 270  
In circuit round about the isle of Aias :  
For if the Hellenes 'scaped an evil doom,  
And found a way of secret, hasty flight,  
It was ordained that all should lose their heads.<sup>1</sup>  
Such things he spake from soul o'erwrought with pride,  
For he knew not what fate the Gods would send ;  
And they, not mutinous, but prompt to serve,  
Then made their supper ready, and each sailor  
Fastened his oar around true-fitting thole ;  
And when the sunlight vanished, and the night  
Had come, then each man, master of an oar, 280  
Went to his ship, and all men bearing arms,  
And through the long ships rank cheered loud to rank ;  
And so they sail, as 'twas appointed each,  
And all night long the captains of the fleet  
Kept their men working, rowing to and fro ;  
Night then came on, and the Hellenic host  
In no wise sought to take to secret flight.  
And when day, bright to look on with white steeds,  
O'erspread the earth, then rose from the Hellenes 290  
Loud chant of cry of battle, and forthwith  
Echo gave answer from each island rock ;  
And terror then on all the Persians fell,  
Of fond hopes disappointed. Not in flight

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks never beheaded their criminals, and the punishment is mentioned as being specially characteristic of the barbaric Persians.

## THE PERSIANS

The Hellenes then their solemn pæans sang :  
But with brave spirit hasting on to battle.  
With martial sound the trumpet fired those ranks ;  
And straight with sweep of oars that flew through foam,  
They smote the loud waves at the boatswain's call ;  
And swiftly all were manifest to sight. 400  
Then first their right wing moved in order meet ;<sup>1</sup>  
Next the whole line its forward course began,  
And all at once we heard a mighty shout,—  
“ O sons of Hellenes, forward, free your country ;  
Free too your wives, your children, and the shrines  
Built to your fathers' Gods, and holy tombs  
Your ancestors now rest in. Now the fight  
Is for our all.” And on our side indeed  
Arose in answer din of Persian speech,  
And time to wait was over ; ship on ship 410  
Dashed its bronze-pointed beak, and first a barque  
Of Hellas did the encounter fierce begin,<sup>2</sup>  
And from Phœnikian vessel crashes off  
Her carved prow. And each against his neighbour  
Steers his own ship : and first the mighty flood  
Of Persian host held out. But when the ships  
Were crowded in the straits,<sup>3</sup> nor could they give  
Help to each other, they with mutual shocks,  
With beaks of bronze went crushing each the other,  
Shivering their rowers' benches. And the ships  
Of Hellas, with manœuvring not unskilful,

<sup>1</sup> The Æginetans and Megarians, according to the account preserved by Diodoros (xi. 18), or the Lacedæmonians, according to Herodotos (viii. 65).

<sup>2</sup> This may be meant to refer to the achievements of Ameinias of Pallene, who appears in the traditional life of Œschylos as his youngest brother.

<sup>3</sup> *Sc.*, in Herod. viii. 60, the strait between Salamis and the mainland.

## THE PERSIANS

Charged circling round them. And the hulls of ships <sup>420</sup>  
Floated capized, nor could the sea be seen,  
Strown, as it was, with wrecks and carcasses ;  
And all the shores and rocks were full of corpses.  
And every ship was wildly rowed in fight,  
All that composed the Persian armament.  
And they, as men spear tunnies,<sup>1</sup> or a haul  
Of other fishes, with the shafts of oars,  
Or spars of wrecks went smiting, cleaving down ;  
And bitter groans and wailings overspread  
The wide sea-waves, till eye of swarthy night <sup>430</sup>  
Bade it all cease : and for the mass of ills,  
Not, though my tale should run for ten full days,  
Could I in full recount them. Be assured  
That never yet so great a multitude  
Died in a single day as died in this.

*Atoss.* Ah, me ! Great then the sea of ills that breaks  
On Persia and the whole barbaric host.

*Mess.* Be sure our evil fate is but half o'er :  
On this has supervened such bulk of woe,  
As more than twice to outweigh what I've told. <sup>440</sup>

*Atoss.* And yet what fortune could beworse than this?  
Say, what is this disaster which thou tell'st,  
That turns the scale to greater evils still ?

*Mess.* Those Persians that were in the bloom of life,  
Bravest in heart and noblest in their blood,  
And by the king himself deemed worthiest trust,  
Basely and by most shameful death have died.

*Atoss.* Ah ! woe is me, my friends, for our ill fate !  
What was the death by which thou say'st they perished ?

<sup>1</sup> Tunny-fishing has always been prominent in the occupations on the Mediterranean coasts, and the sailors who formed so large a part of every Athenian audience would be familiar with the process here described, of striking or harpooning them. Aristophanes (*Wasps*, 1087) coins (or uses) the word "to tunny" (*θυρράζω*) to express the act. Comp. Herod. i. 62.

## THE PERSIANS

*Mess.* There is an isle that lies off Salamis,<sup>1</sup>  
 Small, with bad anchorage for ships, where Pan, 450  
 Pan the dance-loving, haunts the sea-washed coast.  
 There Xerxes sends these men, that when their foes,  
 Being wrecked, should to the islands safely swim,  
 They might with ease destroy th' Hellenic host,  
 And save their friends from out the deep sea's paths ;  
 But ill the future guessing : for when God  
 Gave the Hellenes the glory of the battle,  
 In that same hour, with arms well wrought in bronze  
 Shielding their bodies, from their ships they leapt,  
 And the whole isle encircled, so that we 460  
 Were sore distressed,<sup>2</sup> and knew not where to turn ;  
 For here men's hands hurled many a stone at them ;  
 And there the arrows from the archer's bow  
 Smote and destroyed them ; and with one great rush,  
 At last advancing, they upon them dash  
 And smite, and hew the limbs of these poor wretches,  
 'Till they each foe had utterly destroyed.  
 [And Xerxes when he saw how deep the ill,<sup>3</sup>  
 Groaned out aloud, for he had ta'en his seat,  
 With clear, wide view of all the army round,  
 On a high cliff hard by the open sea ;  
 And tearing then his robes with bitter cry, 470

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.*, Psyttaleia, lying between Salamis and the mainland. Pausanias (i. 36-82) describes it in his time as having no artistic shrine or statue, but full everywhere of roughly carved images of Pan, to whom the island was sacred. It lay just opposite the entrance to the Peiræos. The connexion of Pan with Salamis and its adjacent islands seems implied in Sophocles, *Aias*, 695.

<sup>2</sup> The manœuvre was, we learn from Herodotos (viii. 95), the work of Aristides, the personal friend of Æschylos, and the statesman with whose policy he had most sympathy.

<sup>3</sup> The lines are noted as probably a spurious addition, by a weaker hand, to the text, as introducing surplusage, as inconsistent with Herodotos, and as faulty in their metrical structure.

## THE PERSIANS

And giving orders to his troops on shore,  
He sends them off in foul retreat. This grief  
'Tis thine to mourn besides the former ills.]

*Atoss.* O hateful Power, how thou of all their hopes  
Hast robbed the Persians! Bitter doom my son  
Devised for glorious Athens, nor did they,  
The invading host who fell at Marathon,  
Suffice; but my son, counting it his task  
'To exact requital for it, brought on him  
So great a crowd of sorrows. But I pray,  
As to those ships that have this fate escaped, 480  
Where did'st thou leave them? Can'st thou clearly tell?

*Mass.* The captains of the vessels that were left,  
With a fair wind, but not in meet array,  
'Took flight: and all the remnant of the army  
Fell in Bœotia—some for stress of thirst  
About the fountain clear, and some of us,  
Panting for breath, cross to the Phokians' land,  
The soil of Doris, and the Melian gulf,  
Where fair Spercheios waters all the plains 490  
With kindly flood, and then the Achæan fields  
And city of the Thessali received us,  
Famished for lack of food;<sup>1</sup> and many died  
Of thirst and hunger, for both ills we bore;  
And then to the Magnetian land we came,  
And that of Macedonians, to the stream  
Of Axios, and Bolbe's reed-grown marsh,  
And Mount Pangaios and the Edonian land.  
And on that night God sent a mighty frost,  
Unwonted at that season, sealing up  
'The whole course of the Strymon's pure, clear flood;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So Herodotos (viii. 115) describes them as driven by hunger to eat even grass and leaves.

<sup>2</sup> No trace of this passage over the frozen Strymon appears in Herodotos, who leaves the reader to imagine that it was



## THE PERSIANS

And they who erst had deemed the Gods as nought, <sup>600</sup>  
 Then prayed with hot entreaties, worshipping  
 Both earth and heaven. And after that the host  
 Ceased from its instant calling on the Gods,  
 It crosses o'er the glassy, frozen stream ;  
 And whosoe'er set forth before the rays  
 Of the bright God were shed abroad, was saved ;  
 For soon the glorious sun with burning blaze  
 Reached the mid-stream and warmed it with its flame,  
 And they, confused, each on the other fell.  
 Blest then was he whose soul most speedily  
 Breathed out its life. And those who yet survived  
 And gained deliverance, crossing with great toil <sup>510</sup>  
 And many a pang through Thrakè, now are come,  
 Escaped from perils, no great number they,  
 To this our sacred land, and so it groans,  
 This city of the Persians, missing much  
 Our country's dear-loved youth. Too true my tale,  
 And many things I from my speech omit,  
 Ills which the Persians suffer at God's hand.

*Chor.* O Power resistless, with what weight of woe  
 On all the Persian race have thy feet leapt !

*Atoss.* Ah ! woe is me for that our army lost ! <sup>620</sup>  
 O vision of the night that cam'st in dreams,  
 Too clearly did'st thou show me of these ill !  
 But ye (*to Chorus*) did judge them far too carelessly ;  
 Yet since your counsel pointed to that course,  
 I to the Gods will first my prayer address.  
 And then with gifts to Earth and to the Dead,  
 Bringing the chrism from my store, I'll come.

crossed, as before, by a bridge. It is hardly, indeed, consistent with dramatic probability that the courier should have remained to watch the whole retreat of the defeated army ; and on this and other grounds, the latter part of the speech has been rejected by some critics as a later addition.

## THE PERSIANS

For our past ills, I know, 'tis all too late,  
But for the future, I may hope, will dawn  
A better fortune! But 'tis now your part  
In these our present ills, in counsel faithful  
To commune with the Faithful; and my son, 530  
Should he come here before me, comfort him,  
And home escort him, lest he add fresh ill  
To all these evils that we suffer now. [Exit

*Chor.* Zeus our king, who now to nothing  
Bring'st the army of the Persians,  
Multitudinous, much boasting;  
And with gloomy woe hast shrouded  
Both Ecbatana and Susa;  
Many maidens now are tearing  
With their tender hands their mantles, 540  
And with tear-floods wet their bosoms,  
In the common grief partaking;  
And the brides of Persian warriors,  
Dainty even in their wailing,  
Longing for their new-wed husbands,  
Reft of bridal couch luxurious,  
With its coverlet so dainty,  
Losing joy of wanton youth-time,  
Mourn in never-sated wailings.  
And I too in fullest measure  
Raise again meet cry of sorrow,  
Weeping for the loved and lost ones.

### STROPHE I

For now the land of Asia mourneth sore, 550  
Left desolate of men,  
'Twas Xerxes led them forth, woe! woe!  
'Twas Xerxes lost them all, woe! woe!  
'Twas Xerxes who with evil counsels sped  
Their course in sea-borne barques.

## THE PERSIANS

Why was Dareios erst so free from harm,  
First bowman of the state,  
The leader whom the men of Susa loved,

### ANTISTROPHE I

While those who fought as soldiers or at sea, 560  
These ships, dark-hulled, well-rowed,  
Their own ships bore them on, woe! woe!  
Their own ships lost them all, woe! woe!  
Their own ships, in the crash of ruin urged,  
And by Ionian hands?<sup>1</sup>  
The king himself, we hear, but hardly 'scapes,  
Through Thrakè's wide-spread steppes,  
And paths o'er which the tempests wildly sweep.

### STROPHE II

And they who perished first, ah me! 570  
Perforce unburied left, alas!  
Are scattered round Kychreia's shore,<sup>2</sup> woe! woe!  
Lament, mourn sore, and raise a bitter cry,  
Grievous, the sky to pierce, woe! woe!  
And let thy mourning voice uplift its strain  
Of loud and full lament.

### ANTISTROPHE II

Torn by the whirling flood, ah me!  
Their carcases are gnawed, alas!  
By the dumb brood of stainless sea, woe! woe! 580  
And each house mourneth for its vanished lord;  
And childless sires, woe! woe!  
Mourning in age o'er griefs the Gods have sent,  
Now hear their utter loss.

<sup>1</sup> The Ionians, not of the Asiatic Ionia, but of Attica.

<sup>2</sup> Kychreia, the archaic name of Salamis.

## THE PERSIANS

### STROPHE III

And throughout all Asia's borders  
None now own the sway of Persia,  
Nor bring any more their tribute,  
Owning sway of sovereign master.  
Low upon the Earth, laid prostrate,  
Is the strength of our great monarch

510

### ANTISTROPHE III

No more need men keep in silence  
Tongues fast bound : for now the people  
May with freedom speak at pleasure ;  
For the yoke of power is broken ;  
And blood-stained in all its meadows  
Holds the sea-washed isle of Aias  
What was once the host of Persia.

### *Re-enter* ATOSSA

*Atoss.* Whoe'er, my friends, is vexed in troublous  
times,

610

Knows that when once a tide of woe sets in,  
A man is wont to fear in everything ;  
But when Fate flows on smoothly, then to trust  
That the same Fate will ever send fair gales.  
So now all these disasters from the Gods  
Seem in mine eyes filled full of fear and dread,  
And in mine ears rings cry unparanlike,  
So great a dread of all has seized my soul :  
And therefore now, without or chariot's state  
Or wonted pomp, have I thus issued forth  
From out my palace, to my son's sire bringing  
Libations loving, gifts propitiatory,  
Meet for the dead ; milk pure and white from cow  
Unblemished, and bright honey that distils

611

## THE PERSIANS

From the flower-working bee, and water drawn  
From virgin fountain, and the draught unmarred  
From mother wild, bright child of ancient vine ;  
And here too of the tree that evermore  
Keeps its fresh life in foliage, the pale olive,  
Is the sweet-smelling fruit, and twined wreaths  
Of flowers, the children of all-bearing earth.<sup>1</sup>  
But ye, my friends, o'er these libations poured  
In honour of the dead, chant forth your hymns,  
And call upon Darcios as a God :  
While I will send unto the Gods below  
These votive offerings which the earth shall drink.

[*Goes to the tomb of DAREIOS in the centre  
of the stage*]

*Chor.* O royal lady, honoured of the Persians,  
Do thou libations pour  
To the dark chambers of the dead below ;  
And we with hymns will pray  
The Powers that act as escorts of the dead  
To give us kindly help beneath the earth.  
But oh, ye holy Ones in darkness dwelling,  
Hermes and Earth, and thou, the Lord of Hell,  
Send from beneath a soul  
Up to the light of earth ;  
For should he know a cure for these our ills,  
He, he alone of men, their end may tell.

### STROPHE I

Doth he, the blest one hear,  
The king, like Gods in power,

<sup>1</sup> The ritual described is Hellenic rather than Persian, and takes its place (Soph. *Electr.* 836 ; Eurip. *Iphig. Taur.* 583 ; Homer, *Il.* xxiii. 219) as showing what offerings were employed to soothe or call up the spirits of the dead. Comp. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxx.

## THE PERSIANS

Hear me, as I send forth  
My cries in barbarous speech,  
Yet very clear to him,—  
Sad, varied, broken cries  
So as to tell aloud  
Our troubles terrible ?  
Ah, doth he hear below ?

640

### ANTISTROPHE I

But thou, O Earth, and ye,  
The other Lords of those  
Beneath the grave that dwell ;  
Grant that the godlike one  
May come from out your home,  
The Persians' mighty God,  
In Susa's palace born ;  
Send him, I pray you, up,  
The like of whom the soil  
Of Persia never hid.

### STROPHE II

Dear was our chief, and dear to us his tomb,  
For dear the life it hides ;  
Aidoneus, O Aidoneus, send him forth,  
Thou who dost lead the dead to Earth again,  
\*Yea, send Darcios. . . . What a king was he !

650

### ANTISTROPHE II

For never did he in war's bloody woe  
Lose all his warrior-host,  
But Heaven-taught Counsellor the Persians called him,  
And Heaven-taught Counsellor in truth he proved,  
Since he still ruled his hosts of subjects well.

## THE PERSIANS

### STROPHE III

Monarch, O ancient monarch, come, oh, come,  
Come to the summit of sepulchral mound, 66  
    Lifting thy foot encased  
    In slipper saffron-dyed,  
    And giving to our view  
    Thy royal tiara's crest :<sup>1</sup>  
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

### ANTISTROPHE III

Yea, come, that thou, O Lord, may'st hear the woes,  
Woes new and strange, our lord has now endured ;  
    For on us now has fallen  
    A dark and Stygian mist,  
    Since all the armed youth  
    Has perished utterly ;  
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

### EPODE

O thou, whose death thy friends  
Bewail with many tears, 67  
    \*Why thus, O Lord of lords,  
\*In double error of wild frenzy born,  
    Have all our triremes good  
    Been lost to this our land,  
Ships that are ships no more, yea, ships no more ?

*The Ghost of DAREIOS appears on the summit of the mound*

*Dar.* O faithful of the Faithful, ye who were  
Companions of my youth, ye Persian elders,

<sup>1</sup> The description obviously gives the state dress of the Persian kings. They alone wore the tiara erect. Xen. *Kyrop.* viii. 3. 13.

## THE PERSIANS

What troubles is't my country toils beneath ?  
The whole plain groans, cut up and furrowed o'er,<sup>1</sup>  
And I, beholding now my queen beloved  
Standing hard by my sepulchre, feared much, 680  
And her libations graciously received ;  
But ye wail loud near this my sepulchre,  
And shouting shrill with cries that raise the dead,  
Ye call me with your plaints. No easy task  
Is it to come, for this cause above all,  
That the great Gods who reign below are apter  
To seize men than release : yet nathless I,  
Being great in power among them, now am come.  
Be quick then, that none blame me as too late ;<sup>2</sup>  
What new dire evils on the Persians weigh ?

*Chor.* I fear to look on thee, 690

Fear before thee to speak,  
With all the awe of thee I felt of old.

*Dar.* But since I came by thy complaints persuaded,  
From below rising, spin no lengthened tale ;  
But shortly, clearly speak, and tell thy story,  
And leave awhile thine awe and fear of me.

*Chor.* I dread thy wish to grant,

<sup>3</sup> I dread to say thee nay,<sup>3</sup>

Saying things that it is hard for friends to speak.

*Dar.* Nay, then, since that old dread of thine prevents  
thee,

<sup>1</sup> Either that he has felt the measured tread of the mourners round his tomb, as they went wailing round and round, or that he has heard the rush of armies, and even the plain tracked by chariot-wheels, and comes, not knowing all these things, to learn what it means.

<sup>2</sup> The words point to the widespread belief that when the souls of the dead were permitted to return to the earth, it was with strict limitations as to the time of their leave of absence.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps— "I dread to speak the truth."



## THE PERSIANS

Do thou [*to AROSSA*], the ancient partner of my bed, <sup>700</sup>  
My noble queen, from these thy plaints and moanings  
Cease, and say something clearly. Human sorrows  
May well on mortals fall ; for many evils,  
Some on the sea, and some on dry land also,  
Happen to men if life be far prolonged.

*Atoss.* O thou, who in the fate of fair good fortune  
Excelled'st all men, who, while yet thou sawest  
The sun's bright rays, did'st lead a life all blessed,  
Admired, yea, worshipped as a God by Persians,  
Now, too, I count thee blest in that thou died'st  
Before thou saw'st the depth of these our evils.  
For now, Darcios, thou shalt hear a story  
Full, yet in briefest moment. Utter ruin,  
To sum up all, is come upon the Persians. <sup>710</sup>

*Dar.* How so ? Hath plague or discord seized my  
country ?

*Atoss.* Not so, but all the host is lost near Athens.

*Dar.* What son of mine led that host hither, tell me ?<sup>1</sup>

*Atoss.* Xerxes o'er-hasty, emptying all the mainland.

*Dar.* Made he this mad attempt by land or water ?

*Atoss.* By both ; two lines there were of two great  
armies.

*Dar.* How did so great a host effect its passage ?

*Atoss.* He bridged the straits of Helle, and found  
transit.

*Dar.* Did he prevail to close the mighty Bosphoros ?

*Atoss.* So was it ; yet some God, it may be, helped  
him. <sup>720</sup>

*Dar.* Alas ! some great God came and stole his  
wisdom.

*Atoss.* Yea, the end shows what evil he accomplished.

<sup>1</sup> According to Herodotus (vii. 225) two brothers of Xerxes  
fell at Thermopylæ.

## THE PERSIANS

*Dar.* And how have they fared, that ye thus bewail them ?

*Atoss.* The naval host, o'ercome, wrecked all the land-force.

*Dar.* What ! Is the whole host by the spear laid prostrate ?

*Atoss.* For this doth Susa's city mourn her losses.

*Dar.* Alas, for that brave force and mighty army !

*Atoss.* The Bactrians all are lost, not old men merely.

*Dar.* Poor fool ! how he hath lost his host's fresh vigour !

*Atoss.* Xerxes, they say, alone, with but few  
others . . . . . 730

*Dar.* What is his end, and where ? Is there no safety ?

*Atoss.* Was glad to gain the bridge that joins two mainlands.

*Dar.* And has he reached this mainland ? Is that certain ?

*Atoss.* Yea, the report holds good. Here is no discord.<sup>1</sup>

*Dar.* Ah mè ! Full swift the oracles' fulfilment !

And on my son hath Zeus their end directed.

I hoped the Gods would work them out more slowly ;  
But when man hastens, God too with him worketh.

And now for all my friends a fount of evils

Seems to be found. And this my son, not knowing, 740

In youth's rash mood, hath wrought ; for he did purpose

To curb the sacred Hellespont with fetters,

As though it were his slave, and sought to alter

The stream of God, the Bosphoros, full-flowing,

And his well-hammered chains around it casting,

Prevailed to make his mighty host a highway ;

And though a mortal, thought, with no good counsel,

<sup>1</sup> As Herodotos (viii. 117) tells the story, the bridge had been broken by the tempest before Xerxes reached it.

## THE PERSIANS

To master all the Gods, yea, e'en Poseidon.  
Nay, was not my poor son oppressed with madness?  
And much I fear lest all my heaped-up treasure  
Become the spoil and prey of the first comer.

*Atoss.* Such things the o'er-hasty Xerxes learns from  
others, 750

By intercourse with men of evil counsel;<sup>1</sup>  
Who say that thou great wealth for thy son gained'st  
By thy spear's might, while he with coward spirit  
Does his spear-work indoors, and nothing addeth  
Unto his father's glory. Such reproaches  
Hearing full oft from men of evil counsel,  
He planned this expedition against Hellas.

*Dar.* Thusthenadced portentous hath been wrought,  
Ever to be remembered, such as ne'er  
Falling on Susa made it desolate,  
Since Zeus our king ordained this dignity,  
That one man should be lord of Asia's plains.  
Where feed her thousand flocks, and hold the rod 760  
Of sovran guidance: for the Median first<sup>2</sup>  
Ruled o'er the host, and then his son in turn  
Finished the work, for reason steered his soul;  
And Kyros came as third, full richly blest,  
And ruled, and gained great peace for all his friends;  
And he won o'er the Lydians and the Phrygians,

<sup>1</sup> Probably Mardonios and Onomacritos the Athenian sooth-sayer are referred to, who, according to Herodotos (vii. 6, viii. 99) were the chief instigators of the expedition.

<sup>2</sup> Astyages, the father-in-law of Kyaxares and grandfather of Kyros. In this case Æschylos must be supposed to accept Xenophon's statement that Kyaxares succeeded to Astyages. Possibly, however, the Median may be Kyaxares I., the father of Astyages, and so the succession here would harmonise with that of Herodotos. The whole succession must be looked on as embodying the loose, floating notions of the Athenians as to the history of their great enemy, rather than as the result of inquiry.

## THE PERSIANS

And conquered all the wide Ionian land ;<sup>1</sup>  
For such his wisdom, he provoked not God.  
And Kyros' son came fourth, and ruled the host ;  
And Mardos fifth held sway, his country's shame,<sup>2</sup> 770  
Shame to the ancient throne ; and him with guile  
Artaphrenes<sup>3</sup> the brave smote down, close leagued  
With men, his friends, to whom the work was given.  
[Sixth, Maraphis and seventh Artaphrenes,]  
And I obtained this post that I desired,  
And with a mighty host great victories won.  
Yet no such evil brought I on the state ;  
But my son Xerxes, young, thinks like a youth,  
And all my solemn charge remembers not ;  
For know this well, my old companions true, 780  
That none of us who swayed the realm of old,  
Did e'er appear as working ills like these.

*Chor.* What then, O King Darcios ? To what end  
Lead'st thou thy speech ? And how, in this our plight,  
Could we, the Persian people, prosper best ?

*Dar.* If ye no more attack the Hellenes' land,  
E'en though the Median host outnumbered theirs.  
To them the very land is true ally.

*Chor.* What meanest thou ? How fights the land  
for them ?

*Dar.* \*It slays with famine those vast multitudes. 790

<sup>1</sup> Stress is laid on the violence to which the Asiatic Ionians had succumbed, and their resistance to which distinguished them from the Lydians or Phrygians, whose submission had been voluntary.

<sup>2</sup> Mardos. Under this name we recognise the Pseudo-Smerdis of Herodotos (iii. 67), who, by restoring the dominion of the Median Magi, the caste to which he himself belonged, brought shame upon the Persians.

<sup>3</sup> Possibly another form of Intaphernes, who appears in Herodotos (iii. 70) as one of the seven conspirators against the Magian Pseudo-Smerdis.

## THE PERSIANS

*Chor.* We then a host, select, compact, will raise.

*Dar.* Nay, e'en the host which now in Hellas stays<sup>1</sup>  
Will ne'er return in peace and safety home.

*Chor.* How say'st thou? Does not all the barbarous  
host

Cross from Europa o'er the straits of Hellè?

*Dar.* But few of many; if 'tis meet for one  
Who looks upon the things already done  
To trust the oracles of Gods; for they,  
Not these or those, but all, are brought to pass:  
If this be so, then, resting on vain hopes,<sup>2</sup> 810  
He leaves a chosen portion of his host:  
And they abide where, watering all the plain,  
Asôpos pours his fertilising stream  
Dear to Bœotian land; and there of ills  
The topmost crown awaits them, penalty  
Of wanton outrage and of godless thoughts;  
For they to Hellas coming, held not back  
In awe from plundering sculptured forms of Gods<sup>3</sup>  
And burning down their temples; and laid low  
Are altars, and the shrines of Gods o'erthrown,  
E'en from their base. They therefore having wrought  
Deeds evil, now are suffering, and will suffer  
Evil not less, and not as yet is seen 810

<sup>1</sup> The force of 300,000 men left in Greece under Mardonios (Herod. viii. 113), afterwards defeated at Platæa.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. the speech of Mardonios urging his plan on Xerxes (Herod. viii. 100).

<sup>3</sup> This was of course a popular topic with the Athenians, whose own temples had been outraged. But other sanctuaries also, the temples at Delphi and Abœ, had shared the same fate, and these sins against the Gods of Hellas were naturally connected in the thoughts of the Greeks with the subsequent disasters of the Persians. In Egypt these outrages had an iconoclastic character. In Athens they were a retaliation for the destruction of the temple at Sardis (Herod. v. 102).

## THE PERSIANS

\*E'en the bare groundwork of the ills, but still  
They grow up to completeness. Such a stream  
Of blood and slaughter soon shall flow from them  
By Dorian spear upon Plataean ground,<sup>1</sup>  
And heaps of corpses shall to children's children,  
Though speechless, witness to the eyes of men  
That mortal man should not wax overproud ;  
For wanton pride from blossom grows to fruit,  
The full corn in the ear, of utter woe,  
And reaps a tear-fraught harvest. Seeing then,  
Such recompense of these things, cherish well  
The memory of Athens and of Hellas ;  
Let no man in his scorn of present fortune,  
And thirst for other, mar his good estate ;  
Zeus is the avenger of o'er-lofty thoughts,  
A terrible controller. Therefore now,  
Since voice of God bids him be wise of heart,  
Admonish him with counsel true and good  
To cease his daring sacrilegious pride ;  
And thou, O Xerxes' mother, old and dear,  
Go to thy home, and taking what apparel  
Is fitting, go to meet thy son ; for all  
The costly robes around his limbs are torn  
To rags and shreds in grief's wild agony.  
But do thou gently soothe his soul with words ;  
For he to thee alone will deign to hearken ;  
But I must leave the earth for darkness deep :  
And ye, old men, farewell, although in woe,  
And give your soul its daily bread of joy ;  
For to the dead no profit bringeth wealth.

*[Exit, disappearing in the earth.]*

<sup>1</sup> The reference to the prominent part taken by the Peloponnesian forces in the battle of Plataeæ is probably due to the political sympathies of the dramatist.

## THE PERSIANS

*Ghor.* I shudder as I hear the many woes  
Both past and present that on Persians fall. 840

*Atoss.* [O God, how many evils fall on me !<sup>1</sup>  
And yet this one woe biteth more than all,  
Hearing my son's shame in the rags of robes  
That clothe his limbs. But I will go and take  
A fit adornment from my house, and try  
To meet my son. We will not in his troubles  
Basely abandon him whom most we love.]

### STROPHE I

*Ghor.* Ah me ! a glorious and a blessed life  
Had we as subjects once,  
When our old king, Dareios, ruled the land, 850  
Meeting all wants, dispassionate, supreme,  
A monarch like a God.

### ANTISTROPHE I

For first we showed the world our noble hosts ;  
And laws of tower-like strength  
Directed all things ; and our backward march  
After our wars unhurt, unsuffering led  
Our prospering armies home.

### STROPHE II

How many towns he took,  
Not crossing Halys' stream<sup>2</sup> 860  
Nor issuing from his home,

<sup>1</sup> The speech of Atossa is rejected by Paley, on internal grounds, as spurious.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently an allusion to the oracle given to Cræsus, that he, if he crossed the Halys, should destroy a great kingdom.

## THE PERSIANS

There where in Strymon's sea,  
The Acheloian Isles<sup>1</sup>  
Lie near the coasts of Thracian colonies.

### ANTISTROPHE II

And those that lie outside the Ægæan main,  
The cities girt with towers,  
They hearkened to our king ;  
And those who boast their site  
By Hellè's full, wide stream,  
Propontis with its bays, and mouth of Pontos broad. 870

### STROPHE III

And all the isles that lie  
Facing the headland jutting in the sea,<sup>2</sup>  
Close bound to this our coast ;  
Lesbos, and Samos with its olive groves ;  
Chios and Paros too ;  
Naxos and Myconos, and Andros too  
On Tenos bordering.

### ANTISTROPHE III

And so he ruled the isles  
That lie midway between the continents,  
Lemnos, and Icaros,  
Rhodos and Cnidos and the Kyprian towns, 880

<sup>1</sup> The name originally given to the Echinades, a group of islands at the mouth of the Acheloös, was applied generically to all islands lying near the mouth of all great rivers, and here, probably, includes Imbros, Thasos, and Samothrakè.

<sup>2</sup> The geography is somewhat obscure, but the words seem to refer to the portion of the islands that are named as opposite (in a southerly direction) to the promontory of the Troad.



## THE PERSIANS

Paphos and Soli famed,  
And with them Salamis,  
Whose parent city now our groans doth cause ;<sup>1</sup>

### EPODE

And many a wealthy town and populous,  
Of Hellenes in the Ionian region dwelling,  
He by his counsel ruled ;  
His was the unconquered strength of warrior host,  
Allies of mingled race.  
And now, beyond all doubt,  
In strife of war defeated utterly,  
We find this high estate  
Through wrath of God o'turned, 890  
And we are smitten low,  
By bitter loss at sea.

*Enter XERXES in kingly apparel, but with his robes rent,  
with Attendants.*

*Xer.* Oh, miserable me !  
Who this dark hateful doom  
That I expected least  
Have met with as my lot,  
With what stern mood and fierce  
Towards the Persian race  
Is God's hand laid on us !  
What woe will come on me ?  
Gone is my strength of limb,  
As I these elders see.  
Ah, would to Heaven, O Zeus,  
That with the men who fell

<sup>1</sup> Salamis in Kypros had been colonised by Teukros, the son of Aias, and had received its name in remembrance of the island in the Saronic Gulf.

## THE PERSIANS

Death's doom had covered me !

900

*Chor.* Ah, woe, O King, woe ! woe !  
For the army brave in fight,  
And our goodly Persian name,  
And the fair array of men,  
Whom God hath now cut off !  
And the land bewails its youth  
Who for our Xerxes fell,  
For him whose deeds have filled  
\*Hades with Persian souls ;  
For many heroes now  
\*Are Hades-travellers,  
Our country's chosen flower,  
Mighty with darts and bow ;  
\*For lo ! the myriad mass  
Of men has perished quite.  
Woe, woe for our fair fame !  
And Asia's land, O King,

910

Is terribly, most terribly, o'erthrown.

*Xer.* I then, oh misery !

Have to my curse been proved  
Sore evil to my country and my race.

*Chor.* Yea, and on thy return  
I will lift up my voice in wailing loud,  
Cry of sore-troubled thought,  
As of a mourner born  
In Mariandynian land,<sup>1</sup>  
Lament of many tears.

920

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Xer.* Yea, utter ye a wail  
Dire and full of grief ;

<sup>1</sup> The Mariandynoi, a Paphlagonian tribe, conspicuous for their orgiastic worship of Adonis, had become proverbial for the wildness of their plaintive dirges.

## THE PERSIANS

For lo ! the face of Fate  
Against me now is turned.

*Chor.* Yea, I will raise a cry  
Dreary and full of grief,  
Giving this tribute due  
To all the people's woes,  
And all our loss at sea,  
Troubles of this our State  
That mourneth for her sons ;  
Yea, I will wail full sore,  
With flood of bitter tears.

### STROPHE II

*Xer.* For Ares, he whose might  
Was in our ships' array,  
Giving victory to our foes,  
Has in Ionians, yea,  
Ionians, found his match,  
And from the dark sea's plain,  
And that ill-omened shore,  
Has a fell harvest reaped.

930

*Chor.* Yea, wail, search out the whole ;  
Where are our other friends ?  
Where thy companions true,  
Such as Pharandakes,  
Susas, Pelagon, P'sammis, Dotamas,  
Agdabatas, Susiskanes,  
From Ecbatana who started ?

940

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Xer.* I left them low in death,  
Falling from Tyrian ship,  
On Salaminian shores,  
Beating now here, now there,  
On the hard rock-girt coast.

## THE PERSIANS

*Chor.* Ah, where Pharnuchos then,  
And Ariomardos brave?  
And where Sevalkes king,  
Lilæos proud of race,  
Memphis and Tharybis,  
Masistras, and Artembares,  
Hystæchmas? This I ask.

951

### STROPHÆ III

*Xer.* Woe! woe is me!  
They have looked on at Athens' ancient towers,  
Her hated towers, ah me!  
All, as by one fell stroke,  
Unhappy in their fate  
Lie gasping on the shore.

*Chor.* And he, thy faithful Eye,<sup>1</sup>  
Who told the Persian host,  
Myriads on myriads o'er,<sup>2</sup>  
Alpistos, son and heir  
Of Batanôchos old

951

\* \* \* \*

And the son of brave Sesames,  
Son himself of Megabates?  
Parthos, and the great Œbares,

Did'st thou leave them, did'st thou leave them?  
Ah, woe! ah, woe is me,  
For those unhappy ones!  
Thou to the Persians brave  
Teltest of ills on ills.

<sup>1</sup> The name seems to have been an official title for some Inspector-General of the Army. Comp. Aristoph. *Acharn.* v. 92.

<sup>2</sup> As in the account which Herodotos gives (vii. 60) of the way in which the army of Xerxes was numbered. *sc.*, by enclosing 10,000 men in a given space, and then filling it again and again till the whole army had passed through.

## THE PERSIANS

### ANTISTROPHE III

*Xer.* Ah, thou dost wake in me  
The memory of the spell of yearning love  
For comrades brave and true,  
Telling of cursed ills,  
Yea, cursed, hateful doom ;  
And lo, within my frame  
My heart cries out, cries out.

970

*Chor.* Yea, another too we long for,  
Xanthes, captain of ten thousand  
Mardian warriors, and Anchares  
Arian born, and great Arsakes  
And Diæxis, lords of horsemen,  
Kigdagatas and Lythimnas,  
Tolmos, longing for the battle :  
\*Much I marvel, much I marvel,<sup>1</sup>  
For they come not, as the rear-guard  
Of thy tent on chariot mounted.<sup>2</sup>

979

### STROPHE IV

*Xer.* Gone those rulers of the army.  
*Chor.* Gone are they in death inglorious.  
*Xer.* Ah woe ! ah woe ! Alas ! alas !  
*Chor.* Ah ! the Gods have sent upon us  
Ill we never thought to look on,  
Eminent above all others ;  
Ne'er hath Atë seen its equal.

<sup>1</sup> Another reading gives—

“ They are buried, they are buried.”

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps referring to the waggon-chariots in which the rider reclines at ease, either protected by a canopy, or, as in the Assyrian sculptures and perhaps in the East generally, overshadowed by a large umbrella which an eunuch holds over him.

# THE PERSIANS

## ANTISTROPHE IV

Smitten we by many sorrows,  
Such as come on men but seldom.

9911

*Chor.* Smitten we, 'tis all too certain. . . .

*Xer.* Fresh woes ! fresh woes ! ah me !

*Chor.* Now with adverse turn of fortune,  
With Ionian seamen meeting,  
Fails in war the race of Persians.

## STROPHE V

*Xer.* Too true. Yea I and that vast host of mine  
Are smitten down.

*Chor.* 'Too true—the Persians' majesty and might  
Have perished utterly.

*Xer.* See'st thou this remnant of my armament ?

*Chor.* I see it, yea, I see. 1000

*Xer.* (*pointing to his quiver.*) Dost see thou that  
which arrows wont to hold ? . . .

*Chor.* What speak'st thou of as saved ?

*Xer.* This treasure-store for darts.

*Chor.* Few, few of many left !

*Xer.* Thus we all helpers lack.

*Chor.* Ionian soldiers flee not from the spear.

## ANTISTROPHE V

*Xer.* Yea, very brave are they, and I have seen  
Unlooked-for woe.

*Chor.* Wilt tell of squadron of our sea-borne ships  
Defeated utterly ?

*Xer.* I tore my robes at this calamity.

*Chor.* Ah me, ah me, ah me. 1010

*Xer.* Ay, more than all 'ah me's' !

*Chor.* Two-fold and three-fold ills !

*Xer.* Grievous to us—but joy,  
Great joy, to all our foes !

## THE PERSIANS

*Chor.* Lopped off is all our strength.

*Xer.* Stripped bare of escort I!

*Chor.* Yea, by sore loss at sea  
Disastrous to thy friends.

### STROPHE VI

*Xer.* Weep for our sorrow, weep,  
Yea, go ye to the house.

*Chor.* Woe for our griefs, woe, woe!

*Xer.* Cry out an echoing cry.

*Chor.* Ill gift of ills on ills.

1020

*Xer.* Weep on in wailing chant.

*Chor.* Oh! ah! Oh! ah!

*Xer.* Grievous our bitter woes.

*Chor.* Ah me, I mourn them sore.

### ANTISTROPHE VI

*Xer.* Ply, ply your hands and groan;  
Yea, for my sake bewail.

*Chor.* I weep in bitter grief.

*Xer.* Cry out an echoing cry.

*Chor.* Yea, we may raise our voice,  
O Lord and King, in wail.

*Xer.* Raise now shrill cry of woe.

*Chor.* Ah me! Ah! Woe is me!

1021

*Xer.* Yea, with it mingle dark. . . .

*Chor.* And bitter, grievous blows.

### STROPHE VII

*Xer.* Yea, beat thy breast, and cry  
After the Mysian type.

*Chor.* Oh, misery! oh, misery!

\* *Xer.* Yea, tear the white hair off thy flowing beard.

## THE PERSIANS

*Chor.* Yea ; with clenched hands, with clenched  
hands, I say,

In very piteous guise.

*Xer.* Cry out, cry out aloud.

*Chor.* That also will I do.

### ANTISTROPHE VII

*Xer.* And with thy fingers tear

Thy bosom's folded robe.

*Chor.* Oh, misery ! oh, misery !

1040

*Xer.* Yea, tear thy hair in wailing for our host.

*Chor.* Yea, with clenched hands, I say, with clenched  
hands,

In very piteous guise.

*Xer.* Be thine eyes wet with tears.

*Chor.* Behold the tears stream down.

### EPODE

*Xer.* Raise a re-echoing cry.

*Chor.* Ah woe ! ah woe !

*Xer.* Go to thy home with wailing loud and long.

*Chor.* O land of Persia, full of lamentations !

*Xer.* Through the town raise your cries.

*Chor.* We raise them, yea, we raise.

1050

*Xer.* Wail, wail, ye men that walked so daintily.

*Chor.* O land of Persia, full of lamentations !

Woe ; woe !

*Xer.* Alas for those who in the triremes perished !

*Chor.* With broken cries of woe will I escort thee.

[*Exeunt in procession, wailing, and  
rending their robes.*]





# THE SEVEN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THEBES

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ETEOCLES      ISMENE

Scout                      ANTIGONE

Herald      Chorus of Theban Maidens

**ARGUMENT.**—When *Œdipus* king of *Thebes* discovered that he had unknowingly been the murderer of his father, and had lived in incest with his mother, he blinded himself. And his two sons, *Eteocles* and *Polyneikes*, wishing to banish the remembrance of these horrors from the eyes of men, at first kept him in confinement. And he, being wroth with them, prayed that they might divide their inheritance with the sword. And they, in fear lest the prayer should be accomplished, agreed to reign in turn, each for a year, and *Eteocles*, as the elder of the two, took the first turn. But when at the end of the year *Polyneikes* came to ask for the kingdom, *Eteocles* refused to give way, and sent him away empty. So *Polyneikes* went to *Argos* and married the daughter of *Adrastos* the king of that country, and gathered together a great army under six great captains, himself going as the seventh, and led it against *Thebes*. And so they compassed it about, and at each of the seven gates of the city was stationed one of the divisions of the army.

*Note.*—*The Seven against Thebes* appears to have been produced B.C. 472, the year after *The Persians*.



## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

SCENE.—THEBES in front of the Acropolis

*Enter ETEOCLES, and crowd of Theban Citizens.*

*Eteoc.* Ye citizens of Cadmos, it behoves  
That one who standeth at the stern of State  
Guiding the helm, with eyes unclosed in sleep,  
Should speak the things that meet occasion's need.  
For should we prosper, God gets all the praise :  
But if (which God forbid !) disaster falls,  
Eteocles, much blame on one head falling,  
Would find his name the by-word of the State,<sup>1</sup>  
Sung in the slanderous ballads of the town ;  
Yes, and with groanings, which may Zeus the Averter,  
True to his name, from us Cadmeians turn !  
But now 'tis meet for all, both him who fails 10  
Of full-grown age, and him advanced in years,  
Yet boasting still a stalwart strength of frame,  
And each in life's full prime, as it is fit,  
'The State to succour and the altars here  
Of these our country's Gods, that never more  
Their votive honours cease,—to help our sons,  
And Earth, our dearest mother and kind nurse ;  
For she, when young ye crept her kindly plain,  
Bearing the whole charge of your nourishment,

<sup>1</sup> Probably directed against the tendency of the Athenians, as shown in their treatment of Miltiades, and later in that of Thukydides, to punish their unsuccessful generals, "*pour encourager les autres.*"

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Reared you as denizens that bear the shield,  
 That ye should trusty prove in this her need. 20  
 And now thus far God turns the scale for us;  
 For unto us, beleaguered these long days,  
 War doth in most things with God's help speed well,  
 But now, as saith the seer, the augur skilled,<sup>1</sup>  
 Watching with ear and mind, apart from fire,  
 The birds oracular with mind unerring,  
 He, lord and master of these prophet-arts,  
 Says that the great attack of the Achæans  
 This very night is talked of, and their plots  
 Devised against the town. But ye, haste all 20  
 Unto the walls and gateways of the forts;  
 Rush ye full-armed, and fill the outer space,  
 And stand upon the platforms of the towers,  
 And at the entrance of the gates abiding  
 Be of good cheer, nor fear ye overmuch  
 The host of aliens. Well will God work all.  
 And I have sent my scouts and watchers forth,  
 And trust their errand is no fruitless one.  
 I shall not, hearing them, be caught with guile.  
[Exeunt Citizens.]

*Enter one of the Scouts.*

*Mess.* King of Cadmeians, great Eteocles,  
 I from the army come with tidings clear, 40  
 And am myself eye-witness of its acts;  
 For seven brave warriors, leading armed bands,  
 Cutting a bull's throat o'er a black-rimmed shield,  
 And dipping in the bull's blood with their hands,  
 Swore before Ares, Enyo,<sup>2</sup> murderous Fear,

<sup>1</sup> Teiresias, as in Sophocles (*Antig.* v. 1005), sitting, though blind, and listening, as the birds flit by him, and the flames burn steadily or fitfully; a various reading gives "apart from sight."

<sup>2</sup> Enyo, the goddess of war, and companion of Ares.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

That they would bring destruction on our town,  
And trample under foot the tower of Cadmos,  
Or dying, with their own blood stain our soil;  
And they memorials for their sires at home  
Placed with their hands upon Adrastus' car,<sup>1</sup> 50  
Weeping, but no wail uttering with their lips,  
For courage iron-hearted breathed out fire  
In manliness unconquered, as when lions  
Flash battle from their eyeballs. And report  
Of these things does not linger on the way.  
I left them casting lots, that each might take,  
As the lot fell, his station at the gate.  
Wherefore do thou our city's chosen ones  
Array with speed at entrance of the gates;  
For near already is the Argive host,  
Marching through clouds of dust, and whitening  
foam 60

Spots all the plain with drops from horses' mouths.  
And thou, as prudent helmsman of the ship,  
Guard thou our fortress ere the blasts of Ares  
Swoop on it wildly; for there comes the roar  
Of the land-wave of armies. And do thou  
Seize for these things the swiftest tide and time;  
And I, in all that comes, will keep my eye  
As faithful sentry; so through speech full clear,  
Thou, knowing all things yonder, shalt be safe.

[*Exit.*

*Eteoc.* O Zeus and Earth, and all ye guardian Gods!  
Thou Curse and strong Erinnyes of my sire! 70  
Destroy ye not my city root and branch,

<sup>1</sup> Amphiaraus the seer had prophesied that Adrastus alone should return home in safety. On his car, therefore, the other chieftains hung the clasps, or locks of hair, or other memorials which in the event of their death were to be taken to their parents.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

With sore destruction smitten, one whose voice  
Is that of Hellas, nor our hearths and homes ;<sup>1</sup>  
Grant that they never hold in yoke of bondage  
Our country free, and town of Cadmos named ;  
But be ye our defence. I deem I speak  
Of what concerns us both ; for still 'tis true,  
A prosperous city honours well the Gods. [Exit

*Enter Chorus of Theban Maidens in solemn procession  
as suppliants*

*Chor.* I in wild terror utter cries of woe ;  
An army leaves its camp and is let loose :  
Hither the vanguard of the horsemen flows, 81  
And the thick cloud of dust,  
That suddenly is seen,  
Dumb herald, yet full clear,  
Constrains me to believe ;  
And smitten with the horses' hoofs, the plain  
Of this my country rings with noise of war ;  
It floats and echoes round,  
Like voice of mountain torrent dashing down  
Resistless in its might.  
Ah Gods ! Ah Goddesses !  
Ward off the coming woe.  
With battle-shout that rises o'er the walls,  
The host whose shields are white <sup>2</sup> 90

<sup>1</sup> The Hellenic feeling, such as the Plataeans appealed to in the Peloponnesian war (Thuc. iii. 58, 59), that it was noble and right for Hellenes to destroy a city of the barbarians, but that they should spare one belonging to a people of their own stock.

<sup>2</sup> The characteristic feature of the Argive soldiers was, that they bore a shield painted white (comp. Sophocles, *Antig.* v. 114). The leaders alone appear to have embellished this with devices and mottoes.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Marches in full array against our city.

Who then, of all the Gods  
Or Goddesses, will come to help and save?  
Say, shall I fall before the shrines of Gods?

O blessed Ones firm fixed!  
'Tis time to clasp your sacred images.  
Why linger we in wailing overmuch?  
Hear ye, or hear ye not, the din of shields?

When, if not now, shall we  
Engage in prayer with peplos and with boughs?<sup>1</sup>  
I hear a mighty sound; it is the din 106

Not of a single spear.  
O Ares! ancient guardian of our land!  
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou betray thy land?

O God of golden casque,  
Look on our city, yea, with favour look,  
The city thou did'st love.

And ye, ye Gods who o'er the city rule,  
Come all of you, come all.

Behold the band of maidens suppliant,  
In fear of bondage foul;

For now around the town  
The wave of warriors bearing sloped crests,  
With blasts of Ares rushing, hoarsely sounds: 110

But thou, O Zeus! true father of us all,  
Ward off, ward off our capture by the foe.

### STROPHE I

For Argives now surround the town of Cadmos,  
And dread of Ares' weapons falls on us;  
And, bound to horses' mouths,

<sup>1</sup> In solemn supplications, the litanies of the ancient world, especially in those to Pallas, the suppliants carried with them in procession the shawl or *peplos* of the Goddess, and with it



## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES'

The bits and curbs ring music as of death ;  
And seven chief rulers of the mighty host,  
With warriors' arms, at each of seven tall gates,  
Spear-armed and harnessed all,  
Stand, having cast their lots.

\* \* \* \*

### MESODE

And thou, O Zeus-born power in war delighting, 120  
O Pallas ! be our city's saviour now ;  
And Thou who curb'st the steed,  
Great King of Ocean's waves,  
Poseidon, with thy trident fish-spear armed,<sup>1</sup>  
Give respite from our troubles, respite give !  
And Thou, O Ares, guard the town that takes  
Its name from Cadmos old,<sup>2</sup>  
Watch o'er it visibly.

### ANTISTROPHE I

And thou, O Kypris, of our race the mother,  
Ward off these ills, for we are thine by blood :  
To thee in many a prayer, 130  
With voice that calls upon the Gods we cry,  
And unto thee draw near as suppliants :

enwrapt her statue. To carry boughs of trees in the hands was one of the uniform, probably indispensable, accompaniments of such processions.

<sup>1</sup> The words recall our thoughts to the original use of the trident, which became afterwards a symbol of Poseidon, as employed by the sailors of Hellas to spear or harpoon the larger fish of the Archipelago. Comp. *Pers* v. 426, where the slaughter of a defeated army is compared to tunny-fishing.

<sup>2</sup> Cadmos, probably "the man from the East," the Phœnikian who had founded Thebes, and sown the dragon's seed, and taught men a Semitic alphabet for the non-Semitic speech of Hellas.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And Thou, Lykeian king, Lykeian be,<sup>1</sup>  
Foe of our hated foes,  
For this our wailing cry ;  
And Thou, O child of Leto, Artemis,  
Make ready now thy bow.

### STROPHE II

Ah ! ah ! I hear a din of chariot wheels  
Around the city walls ;  
O Hera great and dread !  
The heavy axles of the chariots groan, 140  
O Artemis beloved !  
And the air maddens with the clash of spears ;  
What must our city bear ?  
What now shall come on us ?  
When will God give the end ?

### ANTISTROPHE II

Ah ! ah ! a voice of stones is falling fast  
On battlements attacked ;<sup>2</sup>  
O Lord, Apollo loved,  
A din of bronze-bound shields is in the gates ;  
And oh ! that Zeus may give 150  
A faultless issue of this war we wage !  
And Thou, O blessed queen,  
As Guardian Onca known,<sup>3</sup>  
Save thy seven-gated seat.

<sup>1</sup> Worthy of his name as the Wolf-destroyer, mighty to destroy his foes.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly "*from* battlements attacked." In the primitive sieges of Greek warfare stones were used as missiles alike by besieged and besiegers.

<sup>3</sup> The name of Onca belonged especially to the Theban worship of Pallas, and was said to have been of Phœnikian origin,

# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## STROPHE III

And ye, all-working Gods,  
Of either sex divine,  
Protectors of our towers,  
Give not our city, captured by the spear,  
To host of alien speech.<sup>1</sup>  
Hear ye our maidens ; hear, 160  
As is most meet, our prayers with outstretched hands.

## ANTISTROPHE III

O all ye loving Powers,  
Compass our State to save ;  
Show how that State ye love ;  
Think on our public votive offerings,  
And as ye think, oh, help :  
Be mindful ye, I pray,  
Of all our city's rites of sacrifice.

## *Re-enter* ETEOCLES

*Eteoc. (to the Chorus)* I ask you, O ye brood intoler-  
able,  
Is this course best and safest for our city ? 170  
Will it give heart to our beleaguered host,  
That ye before the forms of guardian Gods  
Should wail and howl, ye loathed of the wise ;<sup>2</sup>

introduced by Cadmos. There seems, however, to have been a town Onkæ in Bœotia, with which the name was doubtless connected.

<sup>1</sup> "Alien," on account of the difference of dialect between the speech of Argos and that of Bœotia, though both were Hellenic.

<sup>2</sup> The vehemence with which Eteocles reproves the wild frenzied wailing of the Chorus may be taken as an element of the higher culture showing itself in Athenian life, which led

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Ne'er be it mine, in ill estate or good,  
 To dwell together with the race of women ;  
 For when they rule, their daring bars approach,  
 And when they fear, alike to house and State  
 Comes greater ill : and now with these your rushings  
 Hither and thither, ye have troubled sore  
 Our subjects with a coward want of heart ;  
 And do your best for those our foes without ; 180  
 And we are harassed by ourselves within.  
 This comes to one who dwells with womankind.  
 And if there be that will not own my sway,  
 Or man or woman in their prime, or those  
 Who can be classed with neither, they shall take  
 Their trial for their life, nor shall they 'scape  
 The fate of stoning. Things outdoors are still  
 The man's to look to : let not woman counsel.  
 Stay thou within, and do no mischief more.  
 Hear'st thou, or no ? or speak I to the deaf ?

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Dear son of Œdipus, 190  
 I shuddered as I heard the din, the din  
     Of many a chariot's noise,  
 When on the axles creaked the whirling wheels,  
     \*And when I heard the sound  
 \*Of fire-wrought curbs within the horses' mouths.  
*Eteoc.* What then ? Did ever yet the sailor flee  
 From stern to stem, and find deliverance so,  
 While his ship laboured in the ocean's wave ?<sup>1</sup>

Solon to restrain such lamentations by special laws (Plutarch, *Solon*, c. 20). Here, too, we note in Æschylos an echo of the teaching of Epimenides.

<sup>1</sup> As now the sailor of the Mediterranean turns to the image of his patron saint, so of old he ran in his distress to the figure

# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* Nay, to the ancient forms  
Of mighty Powers I rushed, as trusting Gods ;  
And when behind the gates  
Was heard the crash of fierce and pelting storm, 200  
Then was it, in my fear,

I prayed the Blessed Ones to guard our city.

*Eteoc.* Pray that our towns hold out 'gainst spear of  
foes.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* Do not the Gods grant these things ?

*Eteoc.* Nay the Gods,  
So say they, leave the captured city's walls.<sup>2</sup>

## STROPHE II

*Chor.* Ah ! never in my life  
May all this goodly company of Gods  
Depart ; nor may I see  
This city scene of rushings to and fro, 210  
\*And hostile army burning it with fire !

*Eteoc.* Nay, call not on the Gods with counsel base ;  
Obedience is the mother of success,  
Child strong to save. 'Tis thus the saying runs.

of his God upon the prow of his ship (often, as in Acts xxviii. 11, that of the *Dioscuri*), and called to it for deliverance (comp. Jonah i. 8).

<sup>1</sup> Eteocles seems to wish for a short, plain prayer for deliverance, instead of the cries and supplications and vain repetitions of the Chorus.

<sup>2</sup> The thought thus expressed was, that the Gods, yielding to the mightier law of destiny, or in their wrath at the guilt of men, left the city before its capture. The feeling was all but universal. Its two representative instances are found in Virgil, *Æn.* 351—

“Excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis  
Di quibus imperium hoc steterat ;”

and the narrative given alike by Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 13), and Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vi. 5, 3), that the cry “Let us depart hence,” was heard at midnight through the courts of the Temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* True is it ; but the Gods  
Have yet a mightier power, and oftentimes,  
In pressure of sore ill,  
It raises one perplexed from direst woe,  
When dark clouds gather thickly o'er his eyes.

*Eteoc.* 'Tis work of men to offer sacrifice  
And victims to the Gods, when foes press hard ; 220  
Thine to be dumb and keep within the house.

## STROPHE III

*Chor.* 'Tis through the Gods we live  
In city unsubdued, and that our towers  
Ward off the multitude of jealous foes.

What Power will grudge us this ?

*Eteoc.* I grudge not your devotion to the Gods ;  
But lest you make my citizens faint-hearted  
Be tranquil, nor to fear's excess give way.

## ANTISTROPHE III

*Chor.* Hearing but now a din  
Strange, wildly mingled, I with shrinking fear  
Here to our city's high Acropolis,

Time-hallowed spot, have come. 270

*Eteoc.* Nay, if ye hear of wounded men or dying,  
Bear them not swiftly off with wailing loud ;

\*For blood of men is Ares' chosen food.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* Hark ! now I hear the panting of the steeds.

*Eteoc.* Clear though thou hear, yet hear not over-  
much.

*Chor.* Lo ! from its depths the fortress groans,  
beleaguered.

<sup>1</sup> Sc., Blood must be shed in war. Ares would not be Ares without it. It is better to take it as it comes.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Eteoc.* It is enough that I provide for this.

*Chor.* I fear : the din increases at the gates.

*Eteoc.* Be still, say nought of these things in the city.

*Chor.* O holy Band !<sup>1</sup> desert ye not our towers. <sup>240</sup>

*Eteoc.* A curse fall on thee ! wilt thou not be still ?

*Chor.* Gods of my city, from the slave's lot save me !

*Eteoc.* 'Tis thou enslav'st thyself and all thy city.

*Chor.* Oh, turn thy darts, great Zeus, against our  
foes !

*Eteoc.* Oh, Zeus, what race of women thou hast  
given us !

*Chor.* A sorry race, like men whose city falls.

*Eteoc.* What ? Cling to these statues, yet speak  
words of ill ?

*Chor.* Fear hurries on my tongue in want of courage.

*Eteoc.* Could'st thou but grant one small boon at  
my prayer ! <sup>250</sup>

*Chor.* Speak it out quickly, and I soon shall know.

*Eteoc.* Be still, poor fool, and frighten not thy friends.

*Chor.* Still am I, and with others bear our fate.

*Eteoc.* These words of thine I much prefer to those :

And further, though no longer at the shrines,  
Pray thou for victory, that the Gods fight with us.

And when my prayers thou hearest, then do thou  
Raise a loud, welcome, holy pæan-shout,

'The Hellenes' wonted cry at sacrifice ;

So cheer thy friends, and check their fear of foes ;

And I unto our country's guardian Gods, <sup>260</sup>

Who hold the plain or watch the agora,

'The springs of Dirke, and Ismenos' stream ;—

If things go well, and this our city's saved,—

I vow that staining with the blood of sheep

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.*, the company of Gods, Pallas, Hera and the others whom the Chorus had invoked.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

The altar-hearths of Gods, or slaying bulls,  
We'll fix our trophies, and our foemen's robes  
On the spear's point on consecrated walls,  
Before the shrines I'll hang.<sup>1</sup> Pray thou this prayer,  
Not weakly wailing, nor with vain wild sobs,  
For no whit more thou'lt 'scape thy destined lot : 270  
And I six warriors, with myself as seventh,  
Against our foes in full state like their own,  
Will station at the seven gates' entrances,  
Ere hurrying heralds and swift-rushing words  
Come and inflame them in the stress of need. [*Exit*

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* My heart is full of care and knows not sleep,  
By panic fear o'ercome ;  
And troubles throng my soul,  
And set a-glow my dread  
Of the great host encamped around our walls,  
As when a trembling dove  
Fears, for her callow brood, 280  
The snakes that come, ill mates for her soft nest ;  
For some upon our towers  
March in full strength of mingled multitude ;  
And what will me befall ?  
And others on our men on either hand  
Hurl rugged blocks of stone.  
In every way, ye Zeus-born Gods, defend 290  
The city and the host  
That Cadmos claim as sire.

<sup>1</sup> Reference to this custom, which has passed from Pagan temples into Christian churches, is found in the *Agamemnon*, v. 562. It was connected, of course, with the general practice of offering as *ex votos* any personal ornaments or clothing as a token of thanksgiving for special mercies.



# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## ANTISTROPHE I

What better land will ye receive for this,  
If ye to foes resign  
This rich and fertile clime,  
And that Dirkean stream,  
Goodliest of founts by great Poseidon sent,  
Who circleth earth, or those  
Who Tethys parent call?<sup>1</sup>  
And therefore, O ye Gods that guard our city,  
Sending on those without  
Our towers a woe that robs men of their life,  
And makes them lose their shield,  
Gain glory for these countrymen of mine;  
And take your standing-ground,  
As saviours of the city, firm and true,  
In answer to our cry  
Of wailing and of prayer.

300

## STROPHE II

For sad it were to hurl to Hades dark  
A city of old fame,  
The spoil and prey of war,  
With foulest shame in dust and ashes laid,  
By an Achæan foe at God's decree;  
And that our women, old and young alike,  
Be dragged away, ah me!  
Like horses, by their hair  
Their robes torn off from them.  
And lo, the city wails, made desolate,  
While with confused cry  
The wretched prisoners meet doom worse than death.  
Ah, at this grievous fate  
I shudder ere it comes.

310

320

<sup>1</sup> Rivers and streams as the children of Tethys and Okeanos.

# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## ANTISTROPHE II

And piteous 'tis for those whose youth is fresh  
    Before the rites that cull  
    Their fair and first-ripe fruit,  
To take a hateful journey from their homes.  
Nay, but I say the dead far better fare  
Than these, for when a city is subdued  
    It bears full many an ill.  
    This man takes prisoner that, 330  
    Or slays, or burns with fire ;  
And all the city is defiled with smoke,  
    And Arcs fans the flame  
In wildest rage, and laying many low,  
    Tramples with foot unclean  
    On all men sacred hold.

## STROPHE III

And hollow din is heard throughout the town,  
    Hemmed in by net of towers ;  
And man by man is slaughtered with the spear,  
    And cries of bleeding babes,  
    Of children at the breast, 340  
    Are heard in piteous wail,  
And rapine, sister of the plunderer's rush,  
    Spoiler with spoiler meets,  
And empty-handed empty-handed calls,  
    Wishing for share of gain,  
Both eager for a portion no whit less,  
    For more than equal lot  
With what they deem the others' hands have found.

## ANTISTROPHE III

And all earth's fruits cast wildly on the ground, 350  
    Meeting the cheerless eye

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Of frugal housewives, give them pain of heart ;  
    And many a gift of earth  
    In formless heaps is whirled  
    In waves of nothingness ;  
And the young maidens know a sorow new ;  
    For now the foe prevails,  
And gains rich prize of wretched captive's bed ;     26  
    And now their only hope  
Is that the night of death will come at last,  
    Their truest, best ally,  
To rescue them from sorrow fraught with tears.

*Enter ETROCLES, followed by his Chief Captains,  
and by the Scout*

*Semi-Chor. A.* 'The army scout, so deem I, brings  
    to us,  
Dear friends, some tidings new, with quickest speed  
Plying the nimble axles of his feet.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, the king's self, the son of  
    Œdipus,  
Is nigh to hear the scout's exact report ;  
And haste denies him too an even step.

*Mess.* I knowing well, will our foes' state report,     37  
How each his lot hath stationed at the gates.  
At those of Prætos, Tydeus thunders loud,  
And him the prophet suffers not to cross  
Ismenos' fords, the victims boding ill.<sup>1</sup>  
And Tydeus, raging eager for the fight,  
Shouts like a serpent in its noon-tide scream,

<sup>1</sup> Here, as in v. 571, Tydeus appears as the real leader of the expedition, who had persuaded Adrastus and the other chiefs to join in it, and Amphiaras, the prophet, the son of Œcleus, as having all along foreseen its disastrous issue. The account of the expedition in the *Œdipus at Colonus* (1300-1330) may be compared with this.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And on the prophet, Œcleus' son, heaps shame,  
That he, in coward fear, doth crouch and fawn  
Before the doom and peril of the fight.  
And with such speech he shakes his triple crest,  
O'ershadowing all his helm, and 'neath his shield 390  
Bells wrought in bronze ring out their chimes of fear ;  
And on his shield he bears this proud device,—  
A firmament enchased, all bright with stars ;<sup>1</sup>  
And in the midst the full moon's glittering orb,  
Sovran of stars and eye of Night, shines forth.  
And thus exulting in o'er boastful arms,  
By the stream's bank he shouts in lust of war,  
[E'en as a war-horse panting in his strength  
Against the curb that galls him, who at sound  
Of trumpet's clang chafes hotly.] Whom wilt thou  
Set against him ? Who is there strong enough  
When the bolts yield, to guard the Proëtan gates ? 391

*Eteoc.* No fear have I of any man's array ;  
Devices have no power to pierce or wound,  
And crest and bells bite not without a spear ;  
And for this picture of the heavens at night,  
Of which thou tellest, glittering on his shield,  
\*Perchance his madness may a prophet prove ;  
For if night fall upon his dying eyes,  
Then for the man who bears that boastful sign  
It may right well be all too truly named, 400  
And his own pride shall prophet be of ill.  
And against Tydeus, to defend the gates,  
I'll set this valiant son of Astacos ;

<sup>1</sup> The legend of the Medusa's head on the shield of Athena shows the practice of thus decorating shields to have been of remote date. In Homer it does not appear as common, and the account given of the shield of Achilles lays stress upon the work of the artist (Hephæstos) who wrought the shield in relief, not, as here upon painted insignia. They were obviously common in the time of Æschylos.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES<sup>1</sup>

Noble is he, and honouring well the throne  
Of Reverence, and hating vaunting speech,  
Slow to all baseness, unattuned to ill :  
And of the dragon-race that Ares spared<sup>1</sup>  
He as a scion grows, a native true,  
E'en Melanippos ; Ares soon will test  
His valour in the hazard of the die :  
And kindred Justice sends him forth to war,  
For her that bore him foeman's spear to check. 410

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* May the Gods grant my champion good  
success !

For justly he goes forth  
For this our State to fight ;  
But yet I quake with fear

To see the deaths of those who die for friends.

*Mess.* Yea, may the Gods give good success to him !  
'The Electran gates have fallen to Capaneus,  
A second giant, taller far than he  
Just named, with boast above a mortal's bounds ;  
And dread his threats against our towers (O Fortune, 420  
Turn them aside !)—for whether God doth will,  
Or willeth not, he says that he will sack<sup>2</sup>  
The city, nor shall e'en the wrath of Zeus,  
On the plain swooping, turn him from his will ;  
And the dread lightnings and hot thunderbolts  
He likens to the heat of noon-day sun.

<sup>1</sup> The older families of Thebes boasted that they sprang from the survivors of the Sparti, who, sprung from the Dragon's teeth, waged deadly war against each other, till all but five were slain. The later settlers, who were said to have come with Cadmos, stood to these as the "greater" to the "lesser *gentes*" at Rome.

<sup>2</sup> So in the *Antigone* of Sophocles (v. 134), Capaneus appears as the special representative of boastful, reckless impiety.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And his device, the naked form of one  
Who bears a torch ; and bright the blaze shines forth  
And in gold characters he speaks the words,  
"THE CITY I WILL BURN." Against this man  
Send forth . . . but who will meet him in the  
fight ? 430

Who, without fear, await this warrior proud ?

*Eteoc.* Herein, too, profit upon profit comes ;  
And 'gainst the vain and boastful thoughts of men,  
Their tongue itself is found accuser true.  
Threatening, equipped for work is Capaneus,  
Scorning the Gods : and giving speech full play,  
And in wild joy, though mortal, vents at Zeus,  
High in the heavens, loud-spoken foaming words.  
And well I trust on him shall rightly come  
Fire-bearing thunder, nothing likened then  
To heat of noon-day sun. And so 'gainst him, 440  
Though very bold of speech, a man is set  
Of fiery temper, Polyphontes strong,  
A trusty bulwark, by the loving grace  
Of guardian Artemis<sup>1</sup> and other Gods.  
Describe another, placed at other gates.

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* A curse on him who 'gainst our city boasts !  
May thunder smite him down 450  
Before he force his way  
Into my home, and drive  
Me from my maiden bower with haughty spear ?  
*Mess.* And now I'll tell of him who by the gates  
Stands next ; for to Eteocles, as third,  
'To march his cohort to Neïstian gates,

<sup>1</sup> Artemis, as one of the special Deities to whom Thebes was consecrated.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES'

Leaped the third lot from upturned brazen helm :  
And he his mares, in head-gear snorting, whirls,  
Full eager at the gates to fall and die ;  
Their whistling nozzles of barbaric mode,  
Are filled with loud blast of the panting nostrils.<sup>1</sup>  
In no poor fashion is his shield devised ; 459  
A full-armed warrior climbs a ladder's rungs,  
And mounts his foeman's towers as bent to sack ;  
And he too cries, in words of written speech,  
That "NOT E'EN ARES FROM THE TOWERS SHALL DRIVE  
HIM."

Send thou against him some defender true,  
To ward the yoke of bondage from our State.

*Eteoc.* Such would I send now ; by good luck indeed  
He has been sent, his vaunting in his deeds,  
Megareus, Creon's son, who claims descent  
From those as Sparti known, and not by noise 479  
Of neighings loud of warlike steeds dismayed,  
Will he the gates abandon, but in death  
Will pay our land his nurture's debt in full,<sup>2</sup>  
Or taking two men, and a town to boot,  
(That on the shield,) will deck his father's house  
With those his trophies. Of another tell  
The bragging tale, nor grudge thy words to me.

### STROPHE II

*Chor.* Him I wish good success,  
O guardian of my home, and for his foes  
All ill success I pray ;

<sup>1</sup> Apparently an Asiatic invention, to increase the terror of an attack of war-chariots.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase and thought were almost proverbial in Athens. Men, as citizens, were thought of as fed at a common table, bound to contribute their gifts to the common stock. When

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And since against our land their haughty words  
 With maddened soul they speak,  
 May Zeus, the sovran judge,  
 With fiery, hot displeasure look on them ! 480

*Mess.* Another stands as fourth at gates hard by,  
 Onca-Athena's, with a shout of war,  
 Hippomedon's great form and massive limbs ;  
 And as he whirled his orb, his vast shield's disk,  
 I shuddered ; yea, no idle words I speak.  
 No cheap and common draughtsman sure was he  
 Who wrought this cunning ensign on his shield :  
 'Typhon emitting from his lips hot blast  
 Of darkling smoke, the flickering twin of fire :  
 And round the belly of the hollow shield  
 A rim was made with wreaths of twisted snakes. 490  
 And he too shouts his war-cry, and in frenzy,  
 As man possessed by Ares, hastes to battle,  
 Like Thyiad, darting terror from his eyes.<sup>1</sup>  
 'Gainst such a hero's might we well may guard ;  
 Already at the gates men brag of rout.

*Eteoc.* First, the great Onca-Pallas, dwelling nigh  
 Our city's gates, and hating man's bold pride,  
 Shall ward him from her nestlings like a snake  
 Of venom dread ; and next Hyperbios, 500  
 The stalwart son of Ænops, has been chosen,  
 A hero 'gainst this herb, willing found  
 To try his destiny at Fortune's hest.  
 No fault has he in form, or heart, or arms ;  
 And Hermes with good reason pairs them off ;  
 For man with man will fight as enemy,

they offered up their lives in battle, they were giving, as Pericles says (Thucyd. ii. 43), their noblest "contribution," paying in full their subscription to the society of which they were members.

<sup>1</sup> Thyiad, another name for the Mænads, the frenzied attendants on Dionysos.



## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And on their shields they'll bring opposing Gods ;  
For this man beareth Typhon, breathing fire,  
And on Hyperbios' shield sits father Zeus,  
Full firm, with burning thunderbolt in hand ;  
And never yet has man seen Zeus, I trow,  
O'ercome. Such then the favour of the Gods, 510  
We with the winners, they with losers are :<sup>1</sup>  
Good reason then the rivals so should fare,  
If Zeus than Typhon stronger be in fight,  
And to Hyperbios Zeus will saviour prove,  
As that device upon his shield presents him.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* Now do I trust that he  
Who bears upon his shield the hated form  
Of Power whom Earth doth shroud,  
Antagonist to Zeus, unloved by men  
And by the ageless Gods,  
Before those gates of ours  
To his own hurt may dash his haughty head. 520

*Mess.* So may it be ! And now the fifth I tell,  
Who the fifth gates, the Northern, occupies,  
Hard by Amphion's tomb, the son of Zeus ;  
And by his spear he swears, (which he is bold  
To honour more than God or his own eyes,)  
That he will sack the fort of the Cadmeians  
With that spear's might. So speaks the offspring fair  
Of mother mountain-bred, a stripling hero ;  
And the soft down is creeping o'er his cheeks, 530  
Youth's growth, and hair that floweth full and thick ;

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.*, in the legends of Typhon, not he, but Zeus, had proved the conqueror. The warrior, therefore, who chose Typhon for his badge was identifying himself with the losing, not the winning side.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And he with soul, not maiden's like his name,<sup>1</sup>  
 But stern, with flashing eye, is standing there.  
 Nor stands he at the gate without a vaunt ;  
 For on his brass-wrought buckler, strong defence,  
 Full-orbed, his body guarding, he the shame  
 Of this our city bears, the ravenous Sphinx,  
 With rivets fixed, all burnished and embossed ;<sup>2</sup>  
 And under her she holdeth a Cadmeian,  
 That so on him most arrows might be shot.  
 No chance that he will fight a peddling fight, 540  
 Nor shame the long, long journey he hath come,  
 Parthenopæos, in Arcadia born :  
 This man did Argos welcome as a guest,  
 And now he pays her for her goodly rearing,  
 And threatens these our towers with . . . God avert it !

*Eteoc.* Should the Gods give them what they plan  
     'gainst us,  
 Then they, with those their godless boastings high,  
 Would perish shamefully and utterly.  
 And for this man of Arcady thou tell'st of,  
 We have a man who boasts not, but his hand  
 Sees the right thing to do ;—Actôr, of him 550  
 I named but now the brother,—who no tongue  
 Divorced from deeds will ever let within  
 Our gates, to spread and multiply our ills,  
 Nor him who bears upon his foeman's shield  
 The image of the hateful venomèd beast ;  
 But she without shall blame him as he tries

<sup>1</sup> The name, as we are told in v. 542, is Parthenopæos, the maiden-faced.

<sup>2</sup> The Sphinx, besides its general character as an emblem of terror, had, of course, a special meaning as directed to the Thebans. The warrior who bore it threatened to renew the old days when the monster whom Œdipus had overcome had laid waste their city.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

To take her in, when she beneath our walls  
Gets sorely bruised and battered.<sup>1</sup> And herein,  
If the Gods will, I prophet true shall prove.

### STROPHE III

*Chor.* Thy words thrill through my breast ;  
My hair stands all on end,  
To hear the boastings great  
Of those who speak great things 560  
Unholy. May the Gods  
Destroy them in our land !

*Mess.* A sixth I tell of, one of noblest mood,  
Amphiaraos, seer and warrior famed ;  
He, stationed at the Homolôian gates,  
Reproves the mighty Tydeus with sharp words  
As 'murderer,' and 'troubler of the State,'<sup>2</sup>  
'To Argos teacher of all direst ills,  
Erinnys' sumpnour,'<sup>3</sup> 'murder's minister,' 570  
Whose counsels led Adrastus to these ills.  
\*And at thy brother Polyneikes glancing  
With eyes uplifted for his father's fate,  
And ending, twice he syllabled his name,<sup>4</sup>  
And called him, and thus speaketh with his lips :—

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.*, the Sphinx on his shield will not be allowed to enter the city. It will only serve as a mark, attracting men to attack both it and the warrior who bears it.

<sup>2</sup> The quarrel between Tydeus and the seer Amphiaraos had been already touched upon.

<sup>3</sup> I have used the old English word to express a term of like technical use in Athenian law processes. As the "sumpnour" called witnesses or parties to a suit into court, so Tydeus had summoned the Erinnys to do her work of destruction.

<sup>4</sup> *Sc.*, so pronounced his name as to emphasise the significance of its two component parts, as indicating that he who bore it was a man of much contention.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

"A goodly deed, and pleasant to the Gods,  
Noble for after age to hear and tell,  
Thy father's city and thy country's Gods  
To waste through might of mercenary host!  
And how shall Justice stay thy mother's tears?<sup>1</sup> 580  
And how, when conquered, shall thy fatherland,  
Laid waste, become a true ally to thee?  
As for myself, I shall that land make rich,<sup>2</sup>  
A prophet buried in a foe's soil:  
'To arms! I look for no inglorious death.'  
So spake the prophet, bearing full-orbed shield  
Wrought all of bronze, no ensign on that orb.  
He wishes to be just, and not to seem,<sup>3</sup>  
Reaping full harvest from his soul's deep furrows,  
Whence ever new and noble counsels spring. 590  
I bid thee send defenders wise and brave  
Against him. Dread is he who fears the Gods.

*Eteoc.* Fie on the chance that brings the righteous  
man

Close-mated with the ungodly! In all deeds

<sup>1</sup> The words are obscure, but seem to refer to the badge of Polyneikes, the figure of Justice described in v. 643 as on his shield. How shall that Justice, the seer asks, console Jocasta for her son's death? Another rendering gives,

"And how shall Justice quench a mother's life?"

the "mother" being the country against which Polyneikes wars.

<sup>2</sup> The words had a twofold fulfilment (1) in the burial of Amphiaraios, in the Theban soil; and (2) in the honour which accrued to Thebes after his death, through the fame of the oracle at his shrine.

<sup>3</sup> The passage cannot be passed over without noticing the old tradition (Plutarch, *Aristeid.* c. 3), that when the actor uttered these words, he and the whole audience looked to Aristides, surnamed the Just, as recognising that the words were true of him as they were of no one else. "Best," instead of "just," is, however, a very old various reading.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

But neither is it meet to weep or wail,  
 Lest cry more grievous on the issue come.  
 Of Polyneikes, name and omen true,  
 We soon shall know what way his badge shall end,  
 Whether his gold-wrought letters shall restore him,  
 His shield's great swelling words with frenzied soul.  
 An if great Justice, Zeus's virgin child,  
 Ruled o'er his words and acts, this might have been ; 660  
 But neither when he left his mother's womb,  
 Nor in his youth, nor yet in ripening age,  
 Nor when his beard was gathered on his chin,  
 Did Justice count him meet for fellowship ;  
 Nor do I think that she befriends him now  
 In this great outrage on his father's land.  
 Yea, justly Justice would as falsely named  
 Be known, if she with one all-daring joined.  
 In this I trust, and I myself will face him :  
 Who else could claim a greater right than I ? 670  
 Brother with brother fighting, king with king,  
 And foe with foe, I'll stand. Come, quickly fetch  
 My greaves that guard against the spear and stones.

*Chor.* Nay, dearest friend, thou son of Ædipus,  
 Be ye not like to him with that ill name.  
 It is enough Cadmeian men should fight  
 Against the Argives. That blood may be cleansed ;  
 But death so murderous of two brothers born,  
 This is pollution that will ne'er wax old.

*Eteoc.* If a man must bear evil, let him still 680  
 Be without shame—sole profit that in death.  
 [No glory comes of base and evil deeds].

*Chor.* What dost thou crave, my son ? Let no ill  
 fate,  
 Frenzied and hot for war,  
 Carry thee headlong on ;  
 Check the first onset of an evil lust.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Eteoc.* Since God so hotly urges on the matter,  
Let all of Laios' race whom Phœbos hates,  
Drift with the breeze upon Cokytos' wave.

*Chor.* An over-fierce and passionate desire  
Stirs thee and pricks thee on  
To work an evil deed  
Of guilt of blood thy hand should never shed. 600

*Eteoc.* Nay, my dear father's curse, in full-grown hate,  
Dwells on dry eyes that cannot shed a tear,  
And speaks of gain before the after-doom.

*Chor.* But be not thou urged on. The coward's name  
Shall not be thine, for thou  
Hast ordered well thy life.  
Dark-robed Erinnyes enters not the house,  
When at men's hands the Gods  
Accept their sacrifice.

*Eteoc.* As for the Gods, they scorned us long ago,  
And smile but on the offering of our deaths; 700  
What boots it then on death's doom still to fawn?

*Chor.* Nay do it now, while yet 'tis in thy power;<sup>1</sup>  
Perchance may fortune shift  
With tardy change of mood,  
And come with spirit less implacable:  
At present fierce and hot  
She waxeth in her rage.

*Eteoc.* Yea, fierce and hot the Curse of Œdipus;  
And all too true the visions of the night,  
My father's treasured store distributing.

*Chor.* Yield to us women, though thou lov'st us not.

*Eteoc.* Speak then what may be done, and be not  
long. 710

*Chor.* Tread not the path that to the seventh gate  
leads.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps "since death is at nigh hand."

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Eteoc.* Thou shalt not blunt my sharpened edge with words.

*Chor.* And yet God loves the victory that submits.<sup>1</sup>

*Eteoc.* That word a warrior must not tolerate.

*Chor.* Dost thou then haste thy brother's blood to shed?

*Eteoc.* If the Gods grant it, he shall not 'scape harm.

[*Exeunt ETEOCLES, Scout, and Captains*]

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* I fear her might who doth this whole house wreck,

The Goddess unlike Gods,

The prophetess of evil all too true,

The Erinnys of thy father's imprecations,

720

Lest she fulfil the curse,

O'er-wrathful, frenzy-fraught,

The curse of Ædipus,

Laying his children low.

'This Strife doth urge them on.

### ANTISTROPHE I

And now a stranger doth divide the lots,

The Chalyb,<sup>2</sup> from the Skythians emigrant,

The stern distributor of heaped-up wealth,

The iron that hath assigned them just so much

<sup>1</sup> The Chorus means that if Eteocles would allow himself to be overcome in this contest of his wishes with their prayers the Gods would honour that defeat as if it were indeed a victory. He makes answer that the very thought of being overcome implied in the word "defeat" in anything is one which the true warrior cannot bear.

<sup>2</sup> The "Chalyb stranger" is the sword, thought of as taking its name from the Skythian tribe of the Chalybes, between Colchis and Armenia, and passing through the Thracians into Greece.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Of land as theirs, no more,  
As may suffice for them  
As grave when they shall fall,  
Without or part or lot  
In the broad-spreading plains.

739

### STROPHE II

And when the hands of each  
The other's blood have shed,  
And the earth's dust shall drink  
The black and clotted gore,  
Who then can purify?  
Who cleanse thee from the guilt?  
Ah me! O sorrows new,  
That mingle with the old woes of our house!

### ANTISTROPHE II

I tell the ancient tale  
Of sin that brought swift doom;  
Till the third age it waits,  
Since Laios, heeding not  
Apollo's oracle,  
(Though spoken thrice to him  
In Pythia's central shrine,  
That dying childless, he should save the State.

740

### STROPHE III

But he by those he loved full rashly swayed,  
Doom for himself begat,  
His murderer Œdipus,  
Who dared to sow in field  
Unholy, whence he sprang,  
A root of blood-flecked woe.  
Madness together brought  
Bridegroom and bride accursed.

750



# THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

## ANTISTROPHE III

And now the sea of evil pours its flood :

    This falling, others rise,

    As with a triple crest,

    Which round the State's stern roars :

    And but a bulwark slight,

    A tower's poor breadth, defends :

769

    And lest the city fall

    With its two kings I fear.

## STROPHE IV

\*And that atonement of the ancient curse

    Receives fulfilment now ; <sup>1</sup>

\*And when they come, the evils pass not by.

E'en so the wealth of sea-adventurers,

    When heaped up in excess,

    Leads but to cargo from the stern thrown out."

## ANTISTROPHE IV

For whom of mortals did the Gods so praise,

    And fellow-worshippers,

770

\*And race of those who feed their flocks and herds <sup>3</sup>

As much as then they honoured Œdipus,

    Who from our country's bounds

Had driven the monster, murderess of men ?

<sup>1</sup> The two brothers, *i.e.*, are set at one again, but it is not in the bonds of friendship, but in those of death.

<sup>2</sup> The image meets us again in *Agam.* 980. Here the thought is, that a man too prosperous is like a ship too heavily freighted. He must part with a portion of his possession, in order to save the rest. Not to part with them leads, when the storm rages, to an enforced abandonment and utter loss.

<sup>3</sup> Another reading gives—

“And race of those who crowd the Agora.”

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

### STROPHE V

And when too late he knew,  
Ah, miserable man ! his wedlock dire,  
Vexed sore with that dread shame,  
With heart to madness driven,  
He wrought a two-fold ill,  
And with the hand that smote his father's life  
\*Blinded the eyes that might his sons have seen. 781

### ANTISTROPHE V

And with a mind provoked  
By nurture scant, he at his sons did hurl<sup>1</sup>  
His curses dire and dark,  
(Ah, bitter curses those !)  
That they with spear in hand  
Should one day share their father's wealth ; and I  
Fear now lest swift Erinnyes should fulfil them.

### *Enter Messenger*

*Mess.* Be of good cheer, ye maidens, mother-reared ;  
Our city has escaped the yoke of bondage, 790  
The boasts of mighty men are fallen low,  
And this our city in calm waters floats,  
And, though by waves lashed, springs not any leak.  
Our fortress still holds out, and we did guard  
The gates with champions who redeemed their pledge.  
In the six gateways almost all goes well ;  
But the seventh gate did King Apollo choose,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been one form of the legends as to the cause of the curse which Œdipus had launched upon his sons, An alternative rendering is—

And with a mind enraged  
At thought of what they were whom he had reared,  
He at his sons did hurl  
His curses dire and dark.

<sup>2</sup> *Sc.*, when Eteocles fell, Apollo took his place at the seventh gate, and turned the tide of war in favour of the Thebans.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Seventh mighty chief, avenging Laios' want  
Of counsel on the sons of Œdipus.

*Chor.* What new disaster happens to our city? <sup>800</sup>

*Mess.* The city's saved, but both the royal brothers, . . .

*Chor.* Who? and what of them? I'm distraught  
with fear.

*Mess.* Be calm, and hear: the sons of Œdipus, . . .

*Chor.* Oh wretched me! a prophet I of ill!

*Mess.* Slain by each other, earth has drunk their  
blood.

*Chor.* Came they to that? 'Tis dire; yet tell it me.

*Mess.* 'Too true, by brother's hand our chiefs are slain.

*Chor.* What, did the brother's hands the brother lay?

*Mess.* No doubt is there that they are laid in dust.

*Chor.* Thus was there then a common fate for both?

*Mess.* \*Yea, it lays low the whole ill-fated race.

*Chor.* These things give cause for gladness and <sup>810</sup>  
tears,

Seeing that our city prospers, and our lords,  
'The generals twain, with well-wrought Skythian steel,  
I have shared between them all their store of goods,  
And now shall have their portion in a grave,  
Borne on, as spake their father's grievous curse."

*Mess.* [The city's saved, but of the brother-kings  
'The earth has drunk the blood, each slain by each.]

*Chor.* Great Zeus! and ye, O Gods!

Guardians of this our town,

Who save in very deed

'The towers of Cadmos old,

820

<sup>1</sup> I follow in this dialogue the arrangement which Paley adopts from Hermann.

<sup>2</sup> There seems an intentional ambiguity. They are "borne on," but it is as the corpses of the dead are borne to the sepulchre.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Shall I rejoice and shout  
Over the happy chance  
That frees our State from harm ;  
Or weep that ill-starred pair,  
The war-chiefs, childless and most miserable,  
Who, true to that ill name  
Of Polyneikes, died in impious mood,  
Contending overmuch ?

### STROPHE

Oh dark, and all too true  
That curse of Œdipus and all his race,<sup>1</sup>  
An evil chill is falling on my heart,  
And, like a Thyiad wild,  
Over his grave I sing a dirge of grief,  
Hearing the dead have died by evil fate,  
Each in foul bloodshed steeped ;  
Ah me ! Ill-omened is the spear's accord.<sup>2</sup>

830

### ANTISTROPHE

It hath wrought out its end,  
And hath not failed, that prayer the father poured ;  
And Laios' reckless counsels work till now :  
I fear me for the State ;  
The oracles have not yet lost their edge ;  
O men of many sorrows, ye have wrought  
This deed incredible ;

840

<sup>1</sup> Not here the curse uttered by Œdipus, but that which rested on him and all his kin. There is possibly an allusion to the curse which Pelops is said to have uttered against Laios when he stole his son Chrysippos. Comp. v. 837.

<sup>2</sup> As in v. 763 we read of the brothers as made one in death, so now of the concord which is wrought out by conflict, the concord, *i.e.*, of the grave.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Not now in word come woes most lamentable.

[*As the Chorus are speaking, the bodies of ETEOCLES  
and POLYNEIKES are brought in solemn procession  
by Theban Citizens*

### EPODE

Yea, it is all too clear,  
'The herald's tale of woe comes full in sight ;  
'Twofold our cares, twin evils born of pride,  
Murderous, with double doom,  
Wrought unto full completeness all these ills.  
What shall I say? What else  
Are they than woes that make this house their home?  
But oh! my friends, ply, ply with swift, strong gale,  
'That even stroke of hands upon your head,<sup>1</sup>  
In funeral order, such as evermore

O'er Acheron sends on  
\*That bark of State, dark-rigged, accursed its voyage,  
Which nor Apollo visits nor the sun,<sup>2</sup>  
On to the shore unseen,  
The resting-place of all.

[ISMENE and ANTIGONE are seen approaching in  
mourning garments, followed by a procession of  
women wailing and lamenting  
For see, they come to bitter deed called forth,  
Ismene and the maid Antigone,  
'To wail their brothers' fall ;  
With little doubt I deem,

<sup>1</sup> The Chorus are called on to change their character, and to pass from the attitude of suppliants, with outstretched arms, to that of mourners at a funeral, beating on their breasts. But, perhaps, the call is addressed to the mourners who are seen approaching with Ismene and Antigone.

<sup>2</sup> The thought is drawn from the *theoris* or pilgrim-ship, which went with snow-white sails, and accompanied by joyful peans, on a solemn mission from Athens to Delos. In contrast

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

That they will pour from fond, deep-bosomed breasts  
A worthy strain of grief:  
But it is meet that we,  
Before we hear their cry,  
Should utter the harsh hymn Erinny's loves,  
And sing to Hades dark  
The Pæan of distress.  
O ye, most evil-fated in your kin,  
Of all who guard their robes with maiden's band,  
I weep and wail, and feigning know I none,  
That I should fail to speak  
My sorrow from my heart.

### STROPHE I

*Semi-Chor. A.* Alas! alas!  
Men of stern mood, who would not list to friends,  
Unwearied in all ills,  
Seizing your father's house, O wretched ones  
With the spear's murderous point.  
*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, wretched they who found a  
wretched doom,  
With havoc of the house.

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Semi-Chor. A.* Alas! alas!  
Ye who laid low the ancient walls of home,  
On sovereignty, ill won,  
Your eyes have looked, and ye at last are brought  
To concord by the sword.

with this type of joy, Æschylos draws the picture of the boat of Charon, which passes over the gloomy pool accompanied by the sighs and gestures of bitter lamentation. So, in the old Attic legend, the ship that annually carried seven youths and maidens to the Minotaur of Crete was conspicuous for its black sails.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, of a truth, the curse of *Œdipus* 880  
Erinnys dread fulfils.

### STROPHE II

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yea, smitten through the heart,  
Smitten through sides where flowed the blood of  
brothers.

Ah me! ye doomed of God!

Ah me! the curses dire

Of deaths ye met with each at other's hands!

*Semi-Chor. B.* Thou tell'st of men death-smitten  
through and through,  
Both in their homes and lives,  
With wrath beyond all speech, 890  
And doom of discord fell,

That sprang from out the curse their father spake.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yea, through the city runs  
A wailing cry. The high towers wail aloud;  
Wails all the plain that loves her heroes well;  
And to their children's sons

The wealth will go for which

The strife of those ill-starred ones brought forth death.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Quick to resent, they shared their  
fortune so,

That each like portion won;

\*Nor can their friends regard

Their umpire without blame; 900

Nor is our voice in thanks to Ares raised.

### STROPHE III

*Semi-Chor. A.* By the sword smitten low,  
'Thus are they now;  
By the sword smitten low,

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THERE'S

There wait them . . . Nay,  
Doth one perchance ask what?  
Shares in their old ancestral sepulchres.

*Semi-Chor. B.* \*The sorrow of the house is borne  
to them

By my heart-rending wail.  
Mine own the cries I pour;  
Mine own the woes I weep,  
Bitter and joyless, shedding truest tears  
From heart that faileth, even as they fall,  
For these two kingly chiefs.

910

### ANTISTROPHE III

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yes; one may say of them,  
That wretched pair,  
That they much ill have wrought  
To their own host;  
Yea, and to alien ranks  
Of many nations fallen in the fray.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Ah! miserable she who bare those  
twain,

'Bove all of women born  
Who boast a mother's name!  
Taking her son, her own,  
As spouse, she bare these children, and they  
both,  
By mutual slaughter and by brothers' hands,  
Have found their end in death.

920

### STROPHE IV

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yes; of the same womb born, and  
doomèd both,  
\*Not as friends part, they fell,  
In strife to madness pushed  
In this their quarrel's end.



## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Semi-Chor. B.* The quarrel now is hushed,  
And in the ensanguined earth their lives are blent ;<sup>1</sup>  
Full near in blood are they.  
Stern umpire of their strifes  
Has been the stranger from beyond the sea,<sup>1</sup>  
Fresh from the furnace, keen and sharpened steel.  
Stern, too, is Ares found,  
Distributing their goods,  
Making their father's curses all too true.

### ANTISTROPHE IV

*Semi-Chor. A.* At last they have their share, ah,  
wretched ones !  
Of burdens sent from God.<sup>940</sup>  
And now beneath them lies  
A boundless wealth of——earth.

*Semi-Chor. B.* O ye who your own race  
Have made to burgeon out with many woes !  
Over the end at last  
The brood of Curses raise  
Their shrill, sharp cry of lamentation loud,  
The race being put to flight of utmost rout,  
And Atë's trophy stands,  
Where in the gates they fell ;  
And Fate, now both are conquered, rests at last.<sup>950</sup>

*Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE, followed by mourning maidens*<sup>2</sup>

*Ant.* Thou wast smitten, and thou smotest.  
*Ism.* Thou did'st slaughter, and wast slaughtered.

<sup>1</sup> The "Chalyb," or iron sword, which the Hellenes had imported from the Skythians. Comp. vv. 70. 86.

<sup>2</sup> The lyrical, operative character of Greek tragedies has to be borne in mind as we read passages like that which follows. They

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Ant.* Thou with spear to death did'st smite him.

*Ism.* Thou with spear to death wast smitten.

*Ant.* Oh, the woe of all your labours!

*Ism.* Oh, the woe of all ye suffered!

*Ant.* Pour the cry of lamentation.

*Ism.* Pour the tears of bitter weeping.

*Ant.* There in death thou liest prostrate.

*Ism.* Having wrought a great destruction.

### STROPHE

*Ant.* Ah! my mind is crazed with wailing.

950

*Ism.* Yea, my heart within me groaneth.

*Ant.* Thou for whom the city weepeth!

*Ism.* Thou too, doomed to all ill-fortune!

*Ant.* By a loved hand thou hast perished.

*Ism.* And a loved form thou hast slaughtered.

*Ant.* Double woes are ours to tell of.

*Ism.* Double woes too ours to look on.

*Ant.* \*Twofold sorrows from near kindred.

*Ism.* \*Sisters we by brothers standing.

970

*Ant.* Terrible are they to tell of.

*Ism.* Terrible are they to look on.

*Chor.* Ah me, thou Destiny,  
Giver of evil gifts, and working woe,

were not meant to be *read*. Uttered in a passionate recitative, accompanied by expressive action, they probably formed a very effective element in the actual representation of the tragedy. We may look on it as the only extant specimen of the kind of wailing which was characteristic of Eastern burials, and which was slowly passing away in Greece under the influence of a higher culture. The early fondness of *Æschylos* for a *finale* of this nature is seen also in *The Persians*, and in a more solemn and subdued form, in the *Eumenides*. The feeling that there was something barbaric in these untoward displays of grief, showed itself alike in the legislation of Solon, and the eloquence of Pericles.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

And thou dread spectral form of Œdipus,  
And swarth Erinnyes too,  
A mighty one art thou.

### ANTISTROPHE

*Ant.* Ah me! ah me! woes dread to look on . . .

*Ism.* Ye showed to me, returned from exile.

*Ant.* Not, when he had slain, returned he.

*Ism.* Nay, he, saved from exile, perished. 480

*Ant.* Yea, I trow too well, he perished.

*Ism.* And his brother, too, he murdered.

*Ant.* Woeful, piteous, are those brothers!

*Ism.* Woeful, piteous, all they suffered!

*Ant.* Woes of kindred wrath enkindling!

*Ism.* Saturate with threefold horrors!

*Ant.* Terrible are they to tell of.

*Ism.* Terrible are they to look on.

*Chor.* Ah me, thou Destiny,  
Giver of evil gifts, and stern of soul,  
And thou dread spectral form of Œdipus, 590  
And swarth Erinnyes too,  
A mighty one art thou.

### EPODE

*Ant.* Thou, then, by full trial knowest . . .

*Ism.* Thou, too, no whit later learning. . . .

*Ant.* When thou cam'st back to this city! . . .

*Ism.* Rival to our chief in warfare.

*Ant.* Woe, alas! for all our troubles!

*Ism.* Woe, alas! for all our evils!

*Ant.* Evils fallen on our houses!

Here, and perhaps throughout, we must think of Antigone as addressing and looking on the corpse of Polyneikes, Ismene on that of Eteocles.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Ism.* Evils fallen on our country !

*Ant.* And on me before all others. . . .

*Ism.* And to me the future waiting. . . . 1090

*Ant.* Woe for those two brothers luckless !

*Ism.* King Eteocles, our leader !

*Ant.* Oh, before all others wretched !

*Ism.* . . . .

*Ant.* Ah, by Atè frenzy-stricken !

*Ism.* Ah, where now shall they be buried ?

*Ant.* There where grave is highest honour.

*Ism.* Ah, the woe my father wedded !

### *Enter a Herald*

*Her.* 'Tis mine the judgment and decrees to  
publish

Of this Cadmeian city's counsellors :

It is decreed Eteocles to honour,

For his goodwill towards this land of ours, 1010

With seemly burial, such as friend may claim ;

For warding off our foes he courted death ;

Pure as regards his country's holy things,

Blameless he died where death the young beseems ;

'This then I'm ordered to proclaim of him.

But for his brother's, Polyneikes' corpse,

'To cast it out unburied, prey for dogs,

As working havoc on Cadmeian land,

Unless some God had hindered by the spear

Of this our prince ;<sup>1</sup> and he, though, dead, shall gain 1020

The curse of all his father's Gods, whom he

[*Pointing to* POLYNEIKES

With alien host dishonouring, sought to take

Our-city. Him by ravenous birds interred

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps

" Unless some God had stood against the spear  
This chief did wield."

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Ingloriously, they sentence to receive  
His full deserts ; and none may take in hand  
'To heap up there a tomb, nor honour him  
With shrill-voiced wailings ; but he still must lie,  
Without the meed of burial by his friends.  
So do the high Cadmeian powers decree.

*Ant.* And I those rulers of Cadmeians tell,<sup>1</sup> 1039  
That if no other care to bury him,  
I will inter him, facing all the risk,  
Burying my brother : nor am I ashamed  
To thwart the State in rank disloyalty ;  
Strange power there is in ties of blood, that we,  
Born of woe-laden mother, sire ill-starred,  
Are bound by : therefore of thy full free-will,  
Share thou, my soul, in woes he did not will,  
Thou living, he being dead, with sister's heart.  
And this I say, no wolves with ravening maw,  
Shall tear his flesh—No ! no ! let none think that !  
For tomb and burial I will scheme for him, 1040  
'Though I be but weak woman, bringing earth  
Within my byssine raiment's fold, and so  
Myself will bury him ; let no man think  
(I say't again) aught else. 'Take heart, my soul !  
'There shall not fail the means effectual.

*Her.* I bid thee not defy the State in this.

*Ant.* I bid thee not proclaim vain words to me.

*Her.* Stern is the people now, with victory flushed.

*Ant.* Stern let them be, he shall not tombless lie.

*Her.* And wilt thou honour whom the State doth  
loathe ?

<sup>1</sup> The speech of the Antigone becomes the starting-point, in the hands of Sophocles, of the noblest of his tragedies. The denial of burial, it will be remembered, was looked on as not merely an indignity and outrage against the feelings of the living, but as depriving the souls of the dead of all rest and peace. As such it was the punishment of parricides and traitors.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

*Ant.* \*Yea, from the Gods he gets an honour  
due.<sup>1</sup> 1050

*Her.* It was not so till he this land attacked.

*Ant.* He, suffering evil, evil would repay.

*Her.* Not against one his arms were turned, but all.

*Ant.* Strife is the last of Gods to end disputes :  
Him I will bury ; talk no more of it.

*Her.* Choose for thyself then, I forbid the deed.

*Chor.* Alas ! alas ! alas !

Ye haughty boasters, race-destroying,  
Now Fates and now Erinnyes, smiting

'The sons of Œdipus, ye slew them,  
With a root-and-branch destruction. 1050

What shall I then do, what suffer ?

What shall I devise in counsel ?

How should I dare nor to weep thee,

Nor escort thee to the burial ?

But I tremble and I shrink from

All the terrors which they threatened,

They who are my fellow-townsmen.

Many mourners thou (*looking to the bier of*  
ETEOCLES) shalt meet with ;

But he, lost one, unlamented,

With his sister's wailing only

Passeth. Who with this complieth ?

*Semi-Chor. A.* Let the city doom or not doom

'Those who weep for Polynceikes ;

<sup>1</sup> The words are obscure enough, the point lying, it may be, in their ambiguity. Antigone here, as in the tragedy of Sophocles, pleads that the Gods have pardoned ; they still command and love the reverence for the dead, which she is about to show. The herald catches up her words and takes them in another sense, as though all the honour he had met with from the Gods had been defeat, and death and shame, as the reward of his sacrilege. Another rendering, however, gives—

“Yes, so the Gods have done with honouring him.”

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

1070

We will go, and we will bury,  
Maidens we in sad procession ;  
For the woe to all is common,  
And our State with voice uncertain,  
Of the claims of Right and Justice ;  
Hither, thither, shifts its praises.

*Semi-Chor. B.* We will thus, our chief attending,  
Speak, as speaks the State, our praises :  
Of the claims of Right and Justice ;<sup>1</sup>  
For next those the Blessed Rulers,  
And the strength of Zeus, he chiefly  
Saved the city of Cadmeians  
From the doom of fell destruction,  
From the doom of whelming utter,  
In the flood of alien warriors.

[*Exeunt* ANTIGONE and *Semi-Chorus A.*, following the corpse of POLYNEIKES ; ISMENE and *Semi-Chorus B.* that of ETEOCLES.]

<sup>1</sup> The words are probably a protest against the changeableness of the Athenian *demos*, as seen especially in their treatment of Aristeides.

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| PROMETHEUS                    | HERMES   |
| OKEANOS                       | STRENGTH |
| HEPHÆSTOS                     | FORCE    |
| <i>Chorus of Ocean Nymphs</i> |          |

*ARGUMENT.*—In the old time, when Cronos was sovereign of the Gods, Zeus, whom he had begotten, rose up against him, and the Gods were divided in their counsels, some, the Titans chiefly, siding with the father, and some with the son. And Prometheus, the son of Earth or Themis, though one of the Titans, supported Zeus, as did also Okeanos, and by his counsels Zeus obtained the victory, and Cronos was chained in Tartaros, and the Titans buried under mountains, or kept in bonds in Hades. And then Prometheus, seeing the miseries of the race of men, of whom Zeus took little heed, stole the fire which till then had belonged to none but Hephæstos and was used only for the Gods, and gave it to mankind, and taught them many arts whereby their wretchedness was lessened. But Zeus being wroth with Prometheus for this deed, sent Hephæstos, with his two helpers, Strength and Force, to fetter him to a rock on Caucasos.

*And in yet another story was the cruelty of the Gods made known. For Zeus loved Io, the daughter of Inachos,*



## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*king of Argos, and she was haunted by visions of the night, telling her of his passion, and she told her father thereof. And Inachos, sending to the God at Delphi, was told to drive Io forth from her home. And Zeus gave her the horns of a cow, and Hera, who hated her because she was dear to Zeus, sent with her a gadfly that stung her, and gave her no rest, and drove her over many lands.*

*Note.*—The play is believed to have been the second of a Trilogy, of which the first was *Prometheus the Fire-giver*, and the third *Prometheus Unbound*.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

SCENE.—SKYTHIA, on the heights of Caucasus. The Euxine  
seen in the distance

*Enter* HEPHÆSTOS, STRENGTH, and FORCE, leading  
PROMETHEUS in chains<sup>1</sup>

*Strength.* Lo! to a plain, earth's boundary remote,  
We now are come,—the tract as Skythian known,  
A desert inaccessible: and now,  
Hephæstos, it is thine to do the hests  
'The Father gave thee, to these lofty crags  
To bind this crafty trickster fast in chains  
Of adamantine bonds that none can break;  
For he thy choice flower stealing, the bright glory  
Of fire that all arts spring from, hath bestowed it  
On mortal men. And so for fault like this  
He now must pay the Gods due penalty,  
'That he may learn to bear the sovereign rule 10  
Of Zeus, and cease from his philanthropy.

*Heph.* O Strength, and thou, O Force, the hest of  
Zeus,

<sup>1</sup> The scene seems at first an exception to the early conventional rule, which forbade the introduction of a third actor on the Greek stage. But it has been noticed that (1) Force does not speak, and (2) Prometheus does not speak till Strength and Force have retired, and that it is therefore probable that the whole work of nailing is done on a lay figure or effigy of some kind, and that one of the two who had before taken part in the dialogue then speaks behind it in the character of Prometheus. So the same actor must have appeared in succession as Okeanos, Io, and Hermes.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

As far as touches you, attains its end,  
And nothing hinders. Yet my courage fails  
To bind a God of mine own kin by force  
To this bare rock where tempests wildly sweep ;  
And yet I needs must muster courage for it :  
’Tis no slight thing the Father’s words to scorn.  
O thou of Themis [*to PROMETHEUS*] wise in counsel  
son,

Full deep of purpose, lo ! against my will,<sup>1</sup>  
I fetter thee against thy will with bonds  
Of bronze that none can loose, to this lone height, <sup>20</sup>  
Where thou shalt know nor voice nor face of man,  
But scorching in the hot blaze of the sun,  
Shalt lose thy skin’s fair beauty. Thou shalt long  
For starry-mantled night to hide day’s sheen,  
For sun to melt the rime of early dawn ;  
And evermore the weight of present ill  
Shall wear thee down. Unborn as yet is he  
Who shall release thee : this the fate thou gain’st  
As due reward for thy philanthropy.  
For thou, a God not fearing wrath of Gods,  
In thy transgression gav’st their power to men ; <sup>21</sup>  
And therefore on this rock of little ease  
Thou still shalt keep thy watch, nor lying down,  
Nor knowing sleep, nor ever bending knee ;  
And many groans and wailings profitless  
Thy lips shall utter ; for the mind of Zeus

<sup>1</sup> Prometheus (*Forethought*) is the son of Themis (*Right*) the second occupant of the Pythian Oracle (*Eumen.* v. 2). His sympathy with man leads him to impart the gift which raised them out of savage animal life, and for this Zeus, who appears throughout the play as a hard taskmaster, sentences him to fetters. Hephaestus, from whom this fire had been stolen, has a touch of pity for him. Strength, who comes as the servant, not of Hephaestus, but of Zeus himself, acts, as such, with merciless cruelty.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Remains inexorable. Who holds a power  
But newly gained<sup>1</sup> is ever stern of mood.

*Strength.* Let be! Why linger in this idle pity?  
Why dost not hate a God to Gods a foe,  
Who gave thy choicest prize to mortal men?

*Heph.* Strange is the power of kin and intercourse.<sup>2</sup>

*Strength.* I own it; yet to slight the Father's  
words, 40

How may that be? Is not that fear the worse?

*Heph.* Still art thou ruthless, full of savagery.

*Strength.* There is no help in weeping over him:  
Spend not thy toil on things that profit not.

*Heph.* O handicraft to me intolerable!

*Strength.* Why loath'st thou it? Of these thy  
present griefs

That craft of thine is not one whit the cause.

*Heph.* And yet I would some other had that skill.

*Strength.* "All things bring toil except for Gods to  
reign;"

For none but Zeus can boast of freedom true. 50

*Heph.* Too well I see the proof, and gainsay not.

*Strength.* Wilt thou not speed to fix the chains on  
him,

Lest He, the Father, see thee loitering here?

*Heph.* Well, here the handcuffs thou may'st see  
prepared.

*Strength.* In thine hands take him. 'Then with all  
thy might'

Strike with thine hammer; nail him to the rocks.

*Heph.* The work goes on, I ween, and not in vain.

<sup>1</sup> The generalised statement refers to Zeus, as having but recently expelled Cronos from his throne in Heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Hephaestus, as the great fire-worker, had taught Prometheus to use the fire which he afterwards bestowed on men.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, "All might is ours except o'er Gods to rule."

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Strength.* Strike harder, rivet, give no whit of ease :  
A wondrous knack has he to find resource,  
Even where all might seem to baffle him.

*Heph.* Lo ! this his arm is fixed inextricably. 80

*Strength.* Now rivet thou this other fast, that he  
May learn, though sharp, that he than Zeus is duller.

*Heph.* No one but he could justly blame my work.

*Strength.* Now drive the stern jaw of the adamant  
wedge

Right through his chest with all the strength thou hast.

*Heph.* Ah me ! Prometheus, for thy woes I groan.

*Strength.* Again, thou'rt loth, and for the foes of Zeus  
Thou groanest : take good heed to it lest thou  
Ere long with cause thyself commiserate.

*Heph.* Thou see'st a sight unsightly to our eyes.

*Strength.* I see this man obtaining his deserts : 70  
Nay, cast thy breast-chains round about his ribs.

*Heph.* I must needs do it. Spare thine o'er much  
bidding ;

Go thou below and rivet both his legs.<sup>1</sup>

*Strength.* Nay, I will bid thee, urge thee to thy work.

*Heph.* There, it is done, and that with no long toil.

*Strength.* Now with thy full power fix the galling  
fettters :

'Thou hast a stern o'erlooker of thy work.

*Heph.* 'Thy tongue but utters words that match thy  
form.<sup>2</sup>

*Strength.* Choose thou the melting mood ; but  
chide not me

For my self-will and wrath and ruthlessness. 80

<sup>1</sup> The words indicate that the effigy of Prometheus, now nailed to the rock, was, as being that of a Titan, of colossal size.

<sup>2</sup> The touch is characteristic as showing that here, as in the *Eumenides*, Æschylos relied on the horribleness of the masks, as part of the machinery of his plays.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Heph.* Now let us go, his limbs are bound in chains.

*Strength.* Here then wax proud, and stealing what belongs

To the Gods, to mortals give it. What can they  
Avail to rescue thee from these thy woes?  
Falsely the Gods have given thee thy name,  
Prometheus, Forethought; forethought thou dost  
need

To free thyself from this rare handiwork.

[*Exeunt* *HEPHÆSTOS*, *STRENGTH*, and *FORCE*,  
leaving *PROMETHEUS* on the rock

*Prom.*<sup>1</sup> Thou firmament of God, and swift-winged  
winds,

Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves

That smile innumerable! Mother of us all,

90

O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,

I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.

Behold in what foul case

I for ten thousand years

Shall struggle in my woe,

In these unseemly chains.

Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest

Hath now devised for me.

Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang

I wail, as I search out

The place and hour when end of all these ills

Shall dawn on me at last.

100

What say I? All too clearly I foresee

The things that come, and nought of pain shall be

<sup>1</sup> The silence of Prometheus up to this point was partly, as has been said, consequent on the conventional laws of the Greek drama, but it is also a touch of supreme insight into the heroic temper. In the presence of his torturers, the Titan will not utter even a groan. When they are gone, he appeals to the sympathy of Nature.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

By me unlooked-for; but I needs must bear  
My destiny as best I may, knowing well  
The might resistless of Necessity.  
And neither may I speak of this my fate,  
Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving  
Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made  
In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk<sup>1</sup>  
I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,  
Which is to men a teacher of all arts, 110  
Their chief resource. And now this penalty  
Of that offence I pay, fast riveted  
In chains beneath the open firmament.

Ha! ha! What now?

What sound, what odour floats invisibly?<sup>2</sup>  
Is it of God or man, or blending both?  
And has one come to this remotest rock  
To look upon my woes? Or what wills he?  
Behold me bound, a God to evil doomed,

The foe of Zeus, and held  
In hatred by all Gods 120  
Who tread the courts of Zeus:  
And this for my great love,

<sup>1</sup> The legend is from Hesiod (*Theogon.*, v. 567). The fennel, or *narthex*, seems to have been a large umbelliferous plant, with a large stem filled with a sort of pith, which was used when dry as tinder. Stalks were carried as wands (the *thyrsi*) by the men and women who joined in Bacchanalian processions. In modern botany, the name is given to the plant which produces Asafoetida, and the stem of which, from its resinous character, would burn freely, and so connect itself with the Promethean myth. On the other hand, the *Narthex Asafoetida* is found at present only in Persia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab.

<sup>2</sup> The ocean nymphs; like other divine ones, would be anointed with ambrosial unguents, and the odour would be wafted before them by the rustling of their wings. This too we may think of as part of the "stage effects" of the play.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Too great, for mortal men.  
Ah me! what rustling sounds  
Hear I of birds not far?  
With the light whirr of wings  
The air re-echoeth:  
All that draws nigh to me is cause of fear.<sup>1</sup>

*Enter Chorus of Ocean Nymphs, with wings,  
floating in the air*<sup>2</sup>

*Chor.* Nay, fear thou nought: in love  
All our array of wings  
In eager race hath come 139  
To this high peak, full hardly gaining o'er  
Our Father's mind and will;  
And the swift-rushing breezes bore me on:  
For lo! the echoing sound of blows on iron  
Pierced to our cave's recess, and put to flight  
My shamefast modesty,  
And I in unshod haste, on winged car,  
'To thee rushed hitherward.

*Prom.* Ah me! ah me!  
Offspring of Tethys blest with many a child, 140  
Daughters of Old Okeanos that rolls  
Round all the earth with never-sleeping stream,  
Behold ye me, and see  
With what chains fettered fast,  
I on the topmost crags of this ravine  
Shall keep my sentry-post unenviable.

<sup>1</sup> The words are not those of a vague terror only. The sufferer knows that his tormentor is to come to him before long on wings, and therefore the sound as of the flight of birds is full of terrors.

<sup>2</sup> By the same stage mechanism the Chorus remains in the air till verse 280, when, at the request of Prometheus, they alight.



## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Chor.* I see it, O Prometheus, and a mist  
Of fear and full of tears comes o'er mine eyes,  
Thy frame beholding thus,  
Writhing on these high rocks  
In adamantine ills. 150

New pilots now o'er high Olympus rule,  
And with new-fashioned laws  
Zeus reigns, down-trampling right,  
And all the ancient powers He sweeps away.

*Prom.* Ah! would that 'neath the Earth, 'neath  
Hades too,  
Home of the dead, far down to Tartaros 160  
Unfathomable He in fetters fast  
In wrath had hurled me down :  
So neither had a God

Nor any other mocked at these my woes ;  
But now, the wretched plaything of the winds,  
I suffer ills at which my foes rejoice.

*Chor.* Nay, which of all the Gods  
Is so hard-hearted as to joy in this ?  
Who, Zeus excepted, doth not pity thee  
In these thine ills ? But He,  
Ruthless, with soul unbent,  
Subdues the heavenly host, nor will He cease<sup>1</sup> 170  
Until his heart be satiate with power,  
Or some one seize with subtle stratagem  
The sovran might that so resistless seemed.

*Prom.* Nay, of a truth, though put to evil shame,

<sup>1</sup> Here, as throughout the play, the poet puts into the mouth of his *dramatis persone* words which must have seemed to the devouter Athenians sacrilegious enough to call for an indictment before the Areiopagos. But the final play of the Trilogv came, we may believe, as the *Eumenides* did in its turn, as a reconciliation of the conflicting thoughts that rise in men's minds out of the seeming anomalies of the world.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

In massive fetters bound,  
The Ruler of the Gods  
Shall yet have need of me, yes, e'en of me,  
To tell the counsel new  
That seeks to strip from him  
His sceptre and his might of sovereignty.

In vain will He with words  
Or suasion's honeyed charms  
Soothe me, nor will I tell  
Through fear of his stern threats,  
Ere He shall set me free  
From these my bonds, and make,  
Of his own choice, amends  
For all these outrages.

180

*Chor.* Full rash art thou, and yield'st  
In not a jot to bitterest form of woe ;  
'Thou art o'er-free and reckless in thy speech :  
But piercing fear hath stirred  
My inmost soul to strife ;

For I fear greatly touching thy distress,  
As to what haven of these woes of thine  
'Thou now must steer : the son of Cronos hath  
A stubborn mood and heart inexorable.

190

*Prom.* I know that Zeus is hard,  
And keeps the Right supremely to himself ;  
But then, I trow, He'll be  
Full pliant in his will,  
When He is thus crushed down.  
Then, calming down his mood  
Of hard and bitter wrath,  
He'll hasten unto me,  
As I to him shall haste,  
For friendship and for peace.

200

*Chor.* Hide it not from us, tell us all the tale :  
For what offence Zeus, having seized thee thus,

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

So wantonly and bitterly insults thee :

If the tale hurt thee not, inform thou us.

*Prom.* Painful are these things to me e'en to speak :

Painful is silence ; everywhere is woe.

For when the high Gods fell on mood of wrath,

And hot debate of mutual strife was stirred,

Some wishing to hurl Cronos from his throne,

That Zeus, forsooth, might reign ; while others strove,

Eager that Zeus might never rule the Gods : 210

Then I, full strongly seeking to persuade

The Titans, yea, the sons of Heaven and Earth,

Failed of my purpose. Scorning subtle arts,

With counsels violent, they thought that they

By force would gain full easy mastery.

But then not once or twice my mother Themis

And Earth, one form though bearing many names,<sup>1</sup>

Had prophesied the future, how 'twould run,

That not by strength nor yet by violence, 220

But guile, should those who prospered gain the day.

And when in my words I this counsel gave, ✓

They deigned not e'en to glance at it at all.

And then of all that offered, it seemed best

To join my mother, and of mine own will,

Not against his will, take my side with Zeus, ✓

And by my counsels, mine, the dark deep pit

Of Tartaros the ancient Cronos holds,

Himself and his allies. Thus profiting

By me, the mighty ruler of the Gods 230

Repay me with these evil penalties :

For somehow this disease in sovereignty

<sup>1</sup> The words leave it uncertain whether Themis is identified with Earth, or, as in the *Eumenides* (v. 2) distinguished from her. The Titans as a class, then, children of Okeanos and Clithôn (another name for *Land* or *Earth*), are the kindred rather than the brothers of Prometheus.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends.<sup>1</sup>  
And since ye ask me under what pretence  
He thus maltreats me, I'll show it you :  
For soon as He upon his father's throne  
Had sat secure, forthwith to divers Gods  
He divers gifts distributed, and his realm  
Began to order. But of mortal men  
He took no heed, but purposed utterly  
To crush their race and plant another new ;  
And, I excepted, none dared cross his will ;  
But I did dare, and mortal men I freed  
From passing on to Hades thunder-stricken ;  
And therefore am I bound beneath these woes,  
Dreadful to suffer, pitiable to see :  
And I, who in my pity thought of men  
More than myself, have not been worthy deemed  
To gain like favour, but all ruthlessly  
I thus am chained, foul shame this sight to Zeus.

*Chor.* Iron-hearted must he be and made of rock  
Who is not moved, Prometheus, by thy woes :  
Fain could I wish I ne'er had seen such things,  
And, seeing them, am wounded to the heart.

*Prom.* Yea, I am piteous for my friends to see.

*Chor.* Did'st thou not go to farther lengths than this ?

*Prom.* I made men cease from contemplating death.<sup>2</sup>

*Chor.* What medicine did'st thou find for that disease ?

<sup>1</sup> The generalising words here, as in v. 35, appeal to the Athenian hatred of all that was represented by the words *tyrant* and *tyranny*.

<sup>2</sup> The state described is that of men who "through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage." That state, the parent of all superstition, fostered the slavish awe in which Zeus delighted. Prometheus, representing the active intellect of man, bestows new powers, new interests, new hopes, which at last divert them from that fear.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Prom.* Blind hopes I gave to live and dwell with them.

*Chor.* Great service that thou did'st for mortal men !

*Prom.* And more than that, I gave them fire, yes I. <sup>260</sup>

*Chor.* Do short-lived men the flaming fire possess ?

*Prom.* Yea, and full many an art they'll learn from it.

*Chor.* And is it then on charges such as these  
That Zeus maltreats thee, and no respite gives  
Of many woes ? And has thy pain no end ?

*Prom.* End there is none, except as pleases Him.

*Chor.* How shall it please ? What hope hast thou ?  
See'st not

That thou hast sinned ? Yet to say how thou sinned'st  
Gives me no pleasure, and is pain to thee.

Well ! let us leave these things, and, if we may,  
Seek out some means to 'scape from this thy woe. <sup>270</sup>

*Prom.* 'Tis a light thing for one who has his foot  
Beyond the reach of evil to exhort  
And counsel him who suffers. This to me  
Was all well known. Yea, willing, willingly  
I sinned, nor will deny it. Helping men,  
I for myself found trouble : yet I thought not  
'That I with such dread penalties as these  
Should wither here on these high-towering crags,  
Lighting on this lone hill and neighbourless.

Wherefore wail not for these my present woes,  
But, drawing nigh, my coming fortunes hear,  
'That ye may learn the whole tale to the end.

Nay, hearken, hearken ; show your sympathy  
With him who suffers now. 'Tis thus that woe,  
Wandering, now falls on this one, now on that.

*Chor.* Not to unwilling hearers hast thou uttered,  
Prometheus, thy request,  
And now with nimble foot abounding  
My swiftly rushing car,

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

And the pure æther, path of birds of heaven, 290  
I will draw near this rough and rocky land,  
For much do I desire  
To hear this tale, full measure, of thy woes.

*Enter OKEANOS, on a car drawn by a winged gryphon*

*Okean.* Lo, I come to thee, Prometheus,  
Reaching goal of distant journey,<sup>1</sup>  
Guiding this my winged courser  
By my will, without a bridle;  
And thy sorrows move my pity.  
Force, in part, I deem, of kindred  
Leads me on, nor know I any,  
Whom, apart from kin, I honour 300  
More than thee, in fuller measure.  
This thou shalt own true and earnest:  
I deal not in glozing speeches.  
Come then, tell me how to help thee;  
Ne'er shalt thou say that one more friendly  
Is found than unto thee is Okean.

*Prom.* Let be. What boots it? Thou then too art  
come

To gaze upon my sufferings. How did'st dare  
Leaving the stream that bears thy name, and caves  
Hewn in the living rock, this land to visit,  
Mother of iron? What then, art thou come  
To gaze upon my fall and offer pity? 310  
Behold this sight: see here the friend of Zeus,  
Who helped to seat him in his sovereignty,  
With what foul outrage I am crushed by him!

*Okean.* I see, Prometheus, and I wish to give thee

<sup>1</sup> The home of Okeanos was in the far west, at the boundary of the great stream surrounding the whole world, from which he took his name.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

My best advice, all subtle though thou be.  
Know thou thyself,<sup>1</sup> and fit thy soul to moods  
To thee full new. New king the Gods have now ;  
But if thou utter words thus rough and sharp,  
Perchance, though sitting far away on high, 320  
Zeus yet may hear thee, and his present wrath  
Seem to thee but as child's play of distress.  
Nay, thou poor sufferer, quit the rage thou hast,  
And seek a remedy for these thine ills.  
A tale thrice-told, perchance I seem to speak :  
Lo! this, Prometheus, is the punishment  
Of thine o'er lofty speech, nor art thou yet  
Humbled, nor yieldest to thy miseries,  
And fain would'st add fresh evils unto these.  
But thou, if thou wilt take me as thy teacher, 330  
Wilt not kick out against the pricks ;<sup>2</sup> seeing well  
A monarch reigns who gives account to none.  
And now I go, and will an effort make,  
If I, perchance, may free thee from thy woes ;  
Be still then, hush thy petulance of speech,  
Or knowest thou not, o'er-clever as thou art,  
That idle tongues must still their forfeit pay ?  
*Prom.* I envy thee, seeing thou art free from blame  
Though thou shared'st all, and in my cause wast bold ;<sup>3</sup>  
Nay, let me be, nor trouble thou thyself ; 340  
Thou wilt not, canst not soothe Him ; very hard  
Is He of soothing. Look to it thyself,  
Lest thou some mischief meet with in the way.

<sup>1</sup> One of the sayings of the Seven Sages, already recognised and quoted as a familiar proverb.

<sup>2</sup> See note on *Agam.* 1602.

<sup>3</sup> In the mythos, Okeanos had given his daughter Hesione in marriage to Prometheus after the theft of fire, and thus had identified himself with his transgression.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Okean.* It is thy wont thy neighbours' minds to  
school  
Far better than thine own. From deeds, not words,  
I draw my proof. But do not draw me back  
When I am hasting on, for lo, I deem,  
I deem that Zeus will grant this boon to me,  
That I should free thee from these woes of thine.

*Prom.* I thank thee much, yea, ne'er will cease to  
thank ;  
For thou no whit of zeal dost lack ; yet take,  
I pray, no trouble for me ; all in vain  
Thy trouble, nothing helping, e'en if thou 350  
Should'st care to take the trouble. Nay, be still ;  
Keep out of harm's way ; sufferer though I be,  
I would not therefore wish to give my woes  
A wider range o'er others. No, not so :  
For lo ! my mind is wearied with the grief  
Of that my kinsman Atlas,<sup>1</sup> who doth stand  
In the far West, supporting on his shoulders  
The pillars of the earth and heaven, a burden  
His arms can ill but hold : I pity too  
The giant dweller of Kilikian caves, 350  
Dread portent, with his hundred hands, subdued

<sup>1</sup> In the *Theogony* of Hesiod (v. 509), Prometheus and Atlas appear as the sons of two sisters. As other Titans were thought of as buried under volcanoes, so this one was identified with the mountain which had been seen by travellers to Western Africa, or in the seas beyond it, rising like a column to support the vault of heaven. In Herodotos (iv. 174) and all later writers, the name is given to the chain of mountains in Lybia, as being the "pillar of the firmament ;" but Humboldt and others identify it with the lonely peak of Teneriffe, as seen by Phœnikian or Hellenic voyagers. Teneriffe, too, like most of the other Titan mountains, was at one time volcanic. Homer (*Odys.* i. 53) represents him as holding the pillars which separate heaven from earth ; Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 517) as himself standing near the Hesperides (this too points to Teneriffe), sustaining the heavens with his head and shoulders.



## PROMETHEUS BOUND

By force, the mighty Typhon,<sup>1</sup> who arose  
'Gainst all the Gods, with sharp and dreadful jaws  
Hissing out slaughter, and from out his eyes  
'There flashed the terrible brightness as of one  
Who would lay low the sovereignty of Zeus.  
But the unsleeping dart of Zeus came on him,  
Down-swooping thunderbolt that breathes out flame,  
Which from his lofty boastings startled him,  
For he i' the heart was struck, to ashes burnt, 370  
His strength all thunder-shattered; and he lies  
A helpless, powerless carcase, near the strait  
Of the great sea, fast pressed beneath the roots  
Of ancient Ætna, where on highest peak  
Hephestos sits and smites his iron red-hot,  
From whence hereafter streams of fire shall burst,<sup>2</sup>  
Devouring with fierce jaws the golden plains  
Of fruitful, fair Sikelia. Such the wrath  
That 'Typhon shall belch forth with bursts of storm,  
Hot, breathing fire, and unapproachable,  
'Though burnt and charred by thunderbolts of Zeus. 381  
Not inexperienced art thou, nor dost need  
My teaching: save thyself, as thou know'st how;  
And I will drink my fortune to the dregs,  
Till from his wrath the mind of Zeus shall rest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The volcanic character of the whole of Asia Minor, and the liability to earthquakes which has marked nearly every period of its history, led men to connect it also with the traditions of the Titans, some accordingly placing the home of Typhon in Phrygia, some near Sardis, some, as here, in Kilikia. Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 820) describes Typhon (or Typhoeus) as a serpent-monster hissing out fire; Pindar (*Pylh.* i. 30, viii. 21) as lying with his head and breast crushed beneath the weight of Ætna, and his feet extending to Cumæ.

<sup>2</sup> The words point probably to an eruption, then fresh in men's memories, which had happened B.C. 476.

<sup>3</sup> By some editors this speech from "No, not so," to "thou know'st how," is assigned to Okeanos.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Okean.* Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, even this,  
Of wrath's disease wise words the healers are?

*Prom.* Yea, could one soothe the troubled heart in  
time,

Nor seek by force to tame the soul's proud flesh.

*Okean.* But in due forethought with bold daring  
blent,

What mischief see'st thou lurking? Tell me this. }<sup>390</sup>

*Prom.* Toil bootless, and simplicity full fond.

*Okean.* Let me, I pray, that sickness suffer, since  
'Tis best being wise to have not wisdom's show.

*Prom.* Nay, but this error shall be deemed as mine.

*Okean.* Thy word then clearly sends me home at  
once.

*Prom.* Yea, lest thy pity for me make a foe. . . .

*Okean.* What! of that new king on his mighty throne?

*Prom.* Look to it, lest his heart be vexed with thee.

*Okean.* Thy fate, Prometheus, teaches me that lesson.

*Prom.* Away, withdraw! keep thou the mind thou  
hast. 400

*Okean.* Thou urgest me who am in act to haste;  
For this my bird four-footed flaps with wings  
The clear path of the æther; and full fain  
Would he bend knee in his own stall at home. [*Exit*

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* I grieve, Prometheus, for thy dreary fate,  
Shedding from tender eyes

The dew of plenteous tears;

With streams, as when the watery south wind blows,  
My cheek is wet; 410

For lo! these things are all unenviable,  
And Zeus, by his own laws his sway maintaining,  
Shows to the elder Gods  
A mood of haughtiness.

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## ANTISTROPHE I

And all the country echoeth with the moan,  
And poureth many a tear  
For that magnificent power  
Of ancient days far-seen that thou did'st share  
With those of one blood sprung ;  
And all the mortal men who hold the plain 420  
Of holy Asia as their land of sojourn,  
They grieve in sympathy  
For thy woes lamentable.

## STROPHE II

And they, the maiden band who find their home  
On distant Colchian coasts,  
Fearless of fight,<sup>1</sup>  
Or Skythian horde in earth's remotest clime,  
By far Mæotic lake ;<sup>2</sup>

## ANTISTROPHE II

\*And warlike glory of Arabia's tribes,<sup>3</sup>  
Who nigh to Caucasos 430  
In rock-fort dwell,  
An army fearful, with sharp-pointed spear  
Raging in war's array.

<sup>1</sup> These are, of course, the Amazons, who were believed to have come through Thrakè from the Tauric Chersonesos, and had left traces of their name and habits in the Attic traditions of Theseus.

<sup>2</sup> Beyond the plains of Skythia, and the lake Mæotis (the sea of Azov) there would be the great river Okeanos, which was believed to flow round the earth.

<sup>3</sup> Sarmatia has been conjectured instead of Arabia. No Greek author sanctions the extension of the latter name to so remote a region as that north of the Caspian.

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## STROPHE III

One other Titan only have I seen,  
One other of the Gods,  
Thus bound in woes of adamantine strength—  
Atlas, who ever groans  
Beneath the burden of a crushing might,  
The out-spread vault of heaven.

## ANTISTROPHE III

And lo! the ocean billows' murmur loud 440  
In one accord with him ;<sup>1</sup>  
The sea-depths groan, and Hades' swarthy pit  
Re-echoeth the sound,  
And fountains of clear rivers, as they flow,  
Bewail his bitter griefs.

*Prom.* Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will  
That I am silent. But my heart is worn,  
Self-contemplating, as I see myself  
Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine  
Gave these young Gods in fulness all their gifts?  
But these I speak not of; for I should tell  
To you that know them. But those woes of men,<sup>2</sup> 450  
List ye to them,—how they, before as babes,  
By me were roused to reason, taught to think;  
And this I say, not finding fault with men,  
But showing my good-will in all I gave.

<sup>1</sup> The Greek leaves the object of the sympathy undefined, but it seems better to refer it to that which Atlas receives from the waste of waters around, and the dark world beneath, than to the pity shown to Prometheus. This has already been dwelt on in line 421.

<sup>2</sup> The passage that follows has for modern paleontologists the interest of coinciding with their views as to the progress of human society, and the condition of mankind during what has been called the "Stone" period. Comp. Lucretius, v. 955-984.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,  
And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms  
Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole  
length

They muddled all at random ; did not know  
Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,  
Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt  
In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants, 460  
In sunless depths of caverns ; and they had  
No certain signs of winter, nor of spring  
Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits ;  
But without counsel fared their whole life long,  
Until I showed the risings of the stars,  
And settings hard to recognise.<sup>1</sup> And I  
Found Number for them, chief device of all,  
\*Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,  
And mother of the Muses.<sup>2</sup> And I first  
Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made 470  
Or to the collar or men's limbs, that so  
They might in man's place bear his greatest toils ;  
And horses trained to love the rein I yoked  
To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state ;<sup>3</sup>  
Nor was it any one but I that found  
Sea-crossing, canvas-wingèd cars of ships :  
Such rare designs inventing (wretched me !)

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Mr. Blakesley's note on Herod. ii. 4, as showing that here there was the greater risk of faulty observation.

<sup>2</sup> Another reading gives perhaps a better sense—

“Memory, handmaid true  
And mother of the Muses.”

<sup>3</sup> In Greece, as throughout the East, the ox was used for all agricultural labours, the horse by the noble and the rich, either in war chariots, or stately processions, or in chariot races in the great games.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

For mortal men, I yet have no device  
By which to free myself from this my woe.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* Foul shame thou sufferest : of thy sense be-  
reaved, 430

Thou errest greatly : and, like leech unskilled,  
Thou lovest heart when smitten with disease,  
And know'st not how to find the remedies  
Wherewith to heal thine own soul's sicknesses.

*Prom.* Hearing what yet remains thou'lt wonder more,  
What arts and what resources I devised :  
And this the chief : if any one fell ill,  
There was no help for him, nor healing food,  
Nor unguent, nor yet potion ; but for want  
Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them  
The blendings of all mild medicaments,<sup>2</sup> 440  
Wherewith they ward the attacks of sickness sore.  
I gave them many modes of prophecy ;<sup>3</sup>  
And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove  
True visions, and made known the ominous sounds  
Full hard to know ; and tokens by the way,  
And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked,—  
Those on the right propitious to mankind,

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this the account of the inventions of Palamedes in Sophocles, *Fragm.* 379.

<sup>2</sup> Here we can recognise the knowledge of one who had studied in the schools of Pythagoras, or had at any rate picked up their terminology. A more immediate connexion may perhaps be traced with the influence of Epimenides, who was said to have spent many years in searching out the healing virtues of plants, and to have written books about them.

<sup>3</sup> The lines that follow form almost a manual of the art of divination as then practised. The "ominous sounds" include chance words, strange cries, any unexpected utterance that connected itself with men's fears for the future. The flights of birds were watched by the diviner as he faced the north, and so the region on the right hand was that of the sunrise, light, blessedness ; on the left there were darkness and gloom and death.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

And those sinister,—and what form of life  
They each maintain, and what their enmities  
Each with the other, and their loves and friendships ; 500  
And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth.  
And with what colour they the Gods would please,  
And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver :  
And with burnt limbs enwrapt in fat, and chine,  
I led men on to art full difficult :

And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire,  
'Till then dim-visioned. So far then for this.  
And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,  
Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say 510  
That he, ere I did, found them ? None, I know,  
Unless he fain would babble idle words.  
In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed,—  
Allarts of mortals from Prometheus spring.

*Chor.* Nay, be not thou to men so over-kind,  
While thou thyself art in sore evil case ;  
For I am sanguine that thou too, released  
From bonds, shalt be as strong as Zeus himself.

*Prom.* It is not thus that Fate's decree is fixed ;  
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes 520  
And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds ;  
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

*Chor.* Who guides the helm, then, of Necessity ?

*Prom.* Fates triple-formed, Errinyes unforgetting.

*Chor.* Is Zeus, then, weaker in his might than these ?

*Prom.* Not even He can 'scape the thing decreed.

*Chor.* What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign ?

*Prom.* Thou may'st no further learn, ask thou no  
more.

*Chor.* 'Tis doubtless some dread secret which thou  
hidest.

*Prom.* Of other theme make mention, for the time 530  
Is not yet come to utter this, but still

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

It must be hidden to the uttermost ;  
For by thus keeping it it is that I  
Escape my bondage foul, and these my pains.

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Ah ! ne'er may Zeus the Lord,  
Whose sovran sway rules all,  
His strength in conflict set  
Against my feeble will !  
Nor may I fail to serve  
The Gods with holy feast  
Of whole burnt-offerings,  
Where the stream ever flows  
That bears my father's name,  
The great Okeanos !  
Nor may I sin in speech !  
May this grace more and more  
Sink deep into my soul  
And never fade away !

540

### ANTISTROPHE I

Sweet is it in strong hope  
To spend long years of life,  
With bright and cheering joy  
Our heart's thoughts nourishing.  
I shudder, seeing thee  
Thus vexed and harassed sore  
By twice ten thousand woes ;  
For thou in pride of heart,  
Having no fear of Zeus,  
In thine own obstinacy,  
Dost show for mortal men,  
Prometheus, love o'ermuch.

550



# PROMETHEUS BOUND

## STROPHE II

See how that boon, dear friends,  
For thee is bootless found.  
Say, where is any help?  
What aid from mortals comes?  
Hast thou not seen this brief and powerless life,  
Fleeting as dreams, with which man's purblind race  
Is fast in fetters bound? 560  
Never shall counsels vain  
Of mortal men break through  
The harmony of Zeus.

## ANTISTROPHE II

This lesson have I learnt  
Beholding thy sad fate,  
Prometheus! Other strains  
Come back upon my mind,  
When I sang wedding hymns around thy bath,  
And at thy bridal bed, when thou did'st take  
In wedlock's holy bands  
One of the same sire born,  
Our own Hesione, 570  
Persuading her with gifts  
As wife to share thy couch.

*Enter Io in form like a fair woman with a heifer's  
horns,<sup>1</sup> followed by the Spectre of ARGOS*

*Io.* What land is this? What people? Whom  
shall I

<sup>1</sup> So Io was represented, we are told, by Greek sculptors (Herod. ii. 41), as Isis was by those of Egypt. The points of contact between the myth of Io and that of Prometheus, as adopted, or perhaps developed, by Æschylos are—(1) that from her the destined deliverer of the chained Titan is to come; (2) that both were suffering from the cruelty of Zeus; (3) that the

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Say that I see thus vexed  
With bit and curb of rock?  
For what offence dost thou  
Bear fatal punishment?  
Tell me to what far land  
I've wandered here in woe.

Ah me! ah me!

Again the gadfly stings me miserable.

Spectre of Argos, thou, the earth-born one—

Ah, keep him off, O Earth!

I fear to look upon that herdsman dread,

Him with ten thousand eyes:

Ah lo! he cometh with his crafty look,

Whom Earth refuses even dead to hold;<sup>1</sup>

But coming from beneath

He hunts me miserable,

And drives me famished o'er the sea-beach sand.

### STROPHE

And still his waxened reed-pipe soundeth clear

A soft and slumberous strain;

O heavens! O ye Gods!

Whither do these long wanderings lead me on?

For what offence, O son of Cronos, what,

wanderings of Io gave scope for the wild tales of far countries on which the imagination of the Athenians fed greedily. But, as the *Suppliants* may serve to show, the story itself had a strange fascination for him. In the birth of Epaphos, and Io's release from her frenzy, he saw, it may be, a reconciliation of what had seemed hard to reconcile, a solution of the problems of the world, like in kind to that which was shadowed forth in the lost *Prometheus Unbound*.

<sup>1</sup> Argos had been slain by Hermes, and his eyes transferred by Hera to the tail of the peacock, and that bird was henceforth sacred to her.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Hast thou thus bound me fast

In these great miseries ?

Ah me ! ah me !

And why with terror of the gadfly's sting

Dost thou thus vex me, frenzied in my soul ?

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,

Or to wild sea-beasts give me as a prey :

Nay, grudge me not, O King,

An answer to my prayers :

601

Enough my many-wandered wanderings

Have exercised my soul,

Nor have I power to learn

How to avert the woe.

(*To Prometheus.*) Hear'st thou the voice of maiden  
crowned with horns ?

*Prom.* Surely I heard the maid by gadfly driven,

Daughter of Inachos, who warmed the heart

Of Zeus with love, and now through Hera's hate

Is tried, perforce, with wanderings over-long ?

### ANTISTROPHE

*Io.* How is it that thou speak'st my father's name ?

Tell me, the suffering one,

610

Who art thou, who, poor wretch,

Who thus so truly nam'st me miserable,

And tell'st the plague from Heaven,

Which with its haunting stings

Wears me to death ? Ah woe !

And I with famished and unseemly bounds

Rush madly, driven by Hera's jealous craft.

Ah, who of all that suffer, born to woe,

620

Have trouble like the pain that I endure ?

But thou, make clear to me,

What yet for me remains,

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

What remedy, what healing for my pangs.

Show me, if thou dost know :

Speak out and tell to me,

The maid by wanderings vexed.

*Prom.* I will say plainly all thou seek'st to know ;  
Not in dark tangled riddles, but plain speech,  
As it is meet that friends to friends should speak ;  
Thou see'st Prometheus who gave fire to men. 630

*Io.* O thou to men as benefactor known,  
Why, poor Prometheus, sufferest thou this pain ?

*Prom.* I have but now mine own woes ceased to wail.

*Io.* Wilt thou not then bestow this boon on me ?

*Prom.* Say what thou seek'st, for I will tell thee all.

*Io.* Tell me, who fettered thee in this ravine ?

*Prom.* The counsel was of Zeus, the hand Hephæstos'.

*Io.* Of what offence dost thou the forfeit pay ?

*Prom.* Thus much alone am I content to tell.

*Io.* Tell me, at least, besides, what end shall come <sup>640</sup>  
To my drear wanderings ; when the time shall be.

*Prom.* Not to know this is better than to know.

*Io.* Nay, hide not from me what I have to bear.

*Prom.* It is not that I grudge the boon to thee.

*Io.* Why then delayest thou to tell the whole ?

*Prom.* Not from ill will, but loth to vex thy soul.

*Io.* Nay, care thou not beyond what pleases me.

*Prom.* If thou desire it I must speak. Hear then.

*Chor.* Not yet though ; grant me share of pleasure too.  
Let us first ask the tale of her great woe, 650  
While she unfolds her life's consuming chances ;  
Her future sufferings let her learn from thee.

*Prom.* 'Tis thy work, Io, to grant these their wish.  
On other grounds and as thy father's kin : <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inachos the father of Io (identified with the Argive river of the same name), was, like all rivers, a son of Okeanos, and therefore brother to the nymphs who had come to see Prometheus.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

For to bewail and moan one's evil chance,  
Here where one trusts to gain a pitying tear  
From those who hear,—this is not labour lost.

*Io.* I know not how to disobey your wish ;  
So ye shall learn the whole that ye desire  
In speech full clear. And yet I blush to tell 660  
The storm that came from God, and brought the loss  
Of maiden face, what way it seized on me.  
For nightly visions coming evermore  
Into my virgin bower, sought to woo me  
With glozing words. "O virgin greatly blest,  
Why art thou still a virgin when thou might'st  
Attain to highest wedlock? For with dart  
Of passion for thee Zeus doth glow, and fain  
Would make thee his. And thou, O child, spurn not 670  
'The bed of Zeus, but go to Lerna's field,  
Where feed thy father's flocks and herds,  
'That so the eye of Zeus may find repose  
From this his craving." With such visions I  
Was haunted every evening, till I dared  
To tell my father all these dreams of night,  
And he to Pytho and Dodona sent  
Full many to consult the Gods, that he,  
Might learn what deeds and words would please Heaven's  
lords.

And they came bringing speech of oracles  
Shot with dark sayings, dim and hard to know. 680  
At last a clear word came to Inachos  
Charging him plainly, and commanding him  
To thrust me from my country and my home,  
To stray at large<sup>1</sup> to utmost bounds of earth ;

<sup>1</sup> The words used have an almost technical meaning as applied to animals that were consecrated to the service of a God, and set free to wander where they liked. The fate of *Io*, as at once devoted to Zeus and animalised in form, was thus shadowed forth in the very language of the Oracle.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

And, should he gainsay, that the fiery bolt  
Of Zeus should come and sweep away his race.  
And he, by Loxias' oracles induced,  
Thrust me, against his will, against mine too,  
And drove me from my home; but spite of all,  
The curb of Zeus constrained him this to do. 680  
And then forthwith my face and mind were changed;  
And hornèd, as ye see me, stung to the quick  
By biting gadfly, I with maddened leap  
Rushed to Kerchneia's fair and limpid stream,  
And fount of Lerna.<sup>1</sup> And a giant herdsman,  
Argos, full rough of temper, followed me,  
With many an eye beholding, on my track:  
And him a sudden and unlooked-for doom  
Deprived of life. And I, by gadfly stung,  
By scourge from Heaven am driven from land to land. 700  
What has been done thou hearest. And if thou  
Can'st tell what yet remains of woe, declare it;  
Nor in thy pity soothe me with false words;  
For hollow words, I deem, are worst of ills.

*Chor.* Away, away, let be:

Ne'er thought I that such tales  
Would ever, ever come unto mine ears;  
Nor that such terrors, woes and outrages,  
Hard to look on, hard to bear, 710  
Would chill my soul with sharp goad, double-edged.  
Ah fate! Ah fate!

I shudder, seeing Io's fortune strange.

*Prom.* Thou art too quick in groaning, full of fear:  
Wait thou a while until thou hear the rest.

*Chor.* Speak thou and tell. Unto the sick 'tis sweet  
Clearly to know what yet remains of pain.

<sup>1</sup> Lerna was the lake near the mouth of the Inachos, close to the sea. Kerchneia may perhaps be identified with the Kenchreæ, the haven of Corinth in later geographies.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Prom.* Your former wish ye gained full easily.  
Your first desire was to learn of her 720  
The tale she tells of her own sufferings;  
Now therefore hear the woes that yet remain  
For this poor maid to bear at Hera's hands.  
And thou, O child of Inachos! take heed  
To these my words, that thou may'st hear the goal  
Of all thy wanderings. First then, turning hence  
Towards the sunrise, tread the untilled plains,  
And thou shalt reach the Skythian nomads, those <sup>1</sup>  
Who on smooth-rolling waggons dwell aloft  
In wicker houses, with far-darting bows 730  
Duly equipped. Approach thou not to these,  
But trending round the coasts on which the surf  
Beats with loud murmurs,<sup>2</sup> traverse thou that clime.  
On the left hand there dwell the Chalybes,<sup>3</sup>  
Who work in iron. Of these do thou beware,  
For fierce are they and most inhospitable;  
And thou wilt reach the river fierce and strong,  
True to its name.<sup>4</sup> This seek not thou to cross,  
For it is hard to ford, until thou come  
To Caucasos itself, of all high hills  
'The highest, where a river pours its strength

<sup>1</sup> The wicker huts used by Skythian or Thrakian nomads (the Calmucks of modern geographers) are described by Herodotos (iv. 46) and are still in use.

<sup>2</sup> *Sc.*, the N.E. boundary of the Euxine, where spurs of the Caucasos ridge approach the sea.

<sup>3</sup> The Chalybes are placed by geographers to the south of Colchis. The description of the text indicates a locality farther to the north.

<sup>4</sup> Probably the Araxes, which the Greeks would connect with a word conveying the idea of a torrent dashing on the rocks. The description seems to imply a river flowing into the Euxine from the Caucasos, and the condition is fulfilled by the Hypanis or *Kouban*.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

From the high peaks themselves. And thou must  
cross 740

Those summits near the stars,<sup>1</sup> must onward go  
Towards the south, where thou shalt find the host  
Of the Amâzons, hating men, whose home  
Shall one day be around Thermôdon's bank,  
By Themiskyra,<sup>1</sup> where the ravenous jaws  
Of Salmydessos ope upon the sea,  
Treacherous to sailors, stepdame stern to ships.<sup>2</sup>  
And they with right good-will shall be thy guides;  
And thou, hard by a broad pool's narrow gates,  
Wilt pass to the Kimmerian isthmus. Leaving  
This boldly, thou must cross Mæotic channel;<sup>3</sup> 750  
And there shall be great fame 'mong mortal men  
Of this thy journey, and the Bosporos<sup>4</sup>  
Shall take its name from thee. And Europe's plain  
Then quitting, thou shalt gain the Asian coast.  
Doth not the all-ruling monarch of the Gods  
Seem all ways cruel? For, although a God,  
He, seeking to embrace this mortal maid,  
Imposed these wanderings on her. 'Thou hast found,

<sup>1</sup> When the Amazons appear in contact with Greek history, they are found in Thrace. But they had come from the coast of Pontos, and near the mouth of the Thermodon (*Thermeh*). The words of Prometheus point to yet earlier migrations from the East.

<sup>2</sup> Here, as in Soph. *Antig.* (970) the name Salmydessos represents the rockbound, havenless coast from the promontory of Thynias to the entrance of the Bosporos, which had given to the Black Sea its earlier name of Axenos, the "inhospitable."

<sup>3</sup> The track is here in some confusion. From the Amazons south of the Caucasos, Io is to find her way to the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea) and the Kimmerian Bosporos, which flows into the Sea of Azov, and so to return to Asia.

<sup>4</sup> Here, as in a hundred other instances, a false etymology has become the parent of a myth. The name Bosporos is probably Asiatic not Greek, and has an entirely different signification.



## PROMETHEUS BOUND

O maiden ! bitter suitor for thy hand ;  
For great as are the ills thou now hast heard,  
Know that as yet not e'er the prelude's known. 760

*Io.* Ah woe ! woe ! woe !

*Prom.* Again thou groan'st and criest. What wilt do  
When thou shalt learn the evils yet to come ?

*Chor.* What ! are there troubles still to come for her ?

*Prom.* Yea, stormy sea of woe most lamentable.

*Io.* What gain is it to live ? Why cast I not  
Myself at once from this high precipice,  
And, dashed to earth, be free from all my woes ?  
Far better were it once for all to die

Than all one's days to suffer pain and grief. 770

*Prom.* My struggles then full hardly thou would'st  
bear,

For whom there is no destiny of death ;  
For that might bring a respite from my woes :  
But now there is no limit to my pangs  
Till Zeus be hurled out from his sovereignty.

*Io.* What ! shall Zeus e'er be hurled from his high  
state ?

*Prom.* Thou would'st rejoice, I trow, to see that fall.

*Io.* How should I not, when Zeus so foully  
wrongs me ?

*Prom.* That this is so thou now may'st hear from me.

*Io.* Who then shall rob him of his sceptred sway ? 780

*Prom.* Himself shall do it by his own rash plans.

*Io.* But how ? Tell this, unless it bringeth harm.

*Prom.* He shall wed one for whom one day he'll grieve.

*Io.* Heaven-born or mortal ? Tell, if tell thou may'st.

*Prom.* Why ask'st thou who ? I may not tell thee that.

*Io.* Shall his bride hurl him from his throne of might ?

*Prom.* Yea ; she shall bear child mightier than his  
sire.

*Io.* Has he no way to turn aside that doom ?

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Prom.* No, none ; unless I from my bonds be loosed.<sup>1</sup>

*Io.* Who then shall loose thee 'gainst the will of  
Zeus ? 790

*Prom.* It must be one of thy posterity.

*Io.* What, shall a child of mine free thee from ills ?

*Prom.* Yea, the third-generation after ten.<sup>2</sup>

*Io.* No more thine oracles are clear to me.

\**Prom.* Nay, seek not thou thine own drear fate to  
know.

*Io.* Do not, a boon presenting, then withdraw it.

*Prom.* Of two alternatives, I'll give thee choice.

*Io.* Tell me of what, then give me leave to choose.

*Prom.* I give it then. Choose, or that I should tell  
Thy woes to come, or who shall set me free. 800

*Chor.* Of these be willing one request to grant  
To her, and one to me ; nor scorn my words :  
Tell her what yet of wanderings she must bear,  
And me who shall release thee. This I crave.

*Prom.* Since ye are eager, I will not refuse  
To utter fully all that ye desire.  
Thee, Io, first I'll tell thy wanderings wild,  
Thou, write it in the tablets of thy mind.  
When thou shalt cross the straits, of continents  
The boundary,<sup>3</sup> take thou the onward path  
On to the fiery-hued and sun-tracked East. 810

<sup>1</sup> The lines refer to the story that Zeus loved Thetis the daughter of Nereus, and followed her to Caucasos, but abstained from marriage with her because Prometheus warned him that the child born of that union should overthrow his father. Here the future is used of what was still contingent only. In the lost play of the Trilogy the myth was possibly brought to its conclusion and connected with the release of Prometheus.

<sup>2</sup> Heracles, whose genealogy was traced through Alcmena, Perseus, Danae, Danaos and seven other names, to Epaphos and Io.

<sup>3</sup> Probably the Kimmerian Bosphoros. The Tanais or Phasis has, however, been conjectured.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

[And first of all, to frozen Northern blasts  
Thou'lt come, and there beware the rushing whirl,  
Lest it should come upon thee suddenly,  
And sweep thee onward with the cloud-rack wild ;] <sup>1</sup>  
Crossing the sea-surf till thou come at last  
Unto Kisthene's Gorgoneian plains,  
Where dwell the grey-haired virgin Phorkides,<sup>2</sup>  
Three, swan-shaped, with one eye between them all  
And but one tooth ; whom nor the sun beholds  
With radiant beams, nor yet the moon by night :  
And near them are their wingèd sisters three,  
The Gorgons, serpent-tressed, and hating men,  
Whom mortal wight may not behold and live. 820  
\*Such is one ill I bid thee guard against ;  
Now hear another monstrous sight : Beware  
The sharp-beaked hounds of Zeus that never bark,<sup>3</sup>  
The Gryphons, and the one-cyed, mounted host  
Of Arimaspians, who around the stream  
That flows o'er gold, the ford of Pluto, dwell :<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The history of the passage in brackets is curious enough to call for a note. They are not in any extant MS., but they are found in a passage quoted by Galen (v. p. 454), as from the *Prometheus Bound*, and are inserted here by Mr. Paley.

<sup>2</sup> Kisthene belongs to the geography of legend, lying somewhere on the shore of the great ocean-river in Lybia or Æthiopia, at the end of the world, a great mountain in the far West, beyond the Hesperides, the dwelling-place, as here, of the Gorgons, the daughters of Phorkys. Those first-named are the Graiæ.

<sup>3</sup> Here, like the "wingèd hound" of v. 1043, for the eagles that are the messengers of Zeus.

<sup>4</sup> We are carried back again from the fabled West to the fabled East. The Arimaspians, with one eye, and the Grypes or Gryphons (the griffins of mediæval heraldry), quadrupeds with the wings and beaks of eagles, were placed by most writers (Herod. iv. 13, 27) in the north of Europe, in or beyond the *terra incognita* of Skythia. The mention of the "ford of Pluto" and Æthiopia, however, may possibly imply (if we

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Draw not thou nigh to them. But distant land  
Thou shalt approach, the swarthy tribes who dwell  
By the sun's fountain,<sup>1</sup> Æthiopia's stream :  
By its banks wend thy way until thou come  
To that great fall where from the Bybline hills 830  
The Neilos pours its pure and holy flood ;  
And it shall guide thee to Neilotic land,  
'Three-angled, where, O Io, 'tis decreed  
For thee and for thy progeny to found  
A far-off colony. And if of this  
Aught seem to thee as stammering speech obscure,  
Ask yet again and learn it thoroughly :  
Far more of leisure have I than I like.

*Chor.* If thou hast aught to add, aught left untold 840  
Of her sore-wasting wanderings, speak it out ;  
But if thou hast said all, then grant to us  
The boon we asked. Thou dost not, sure, forget it.

*Prom.* The whole course of her journeying she  
hath heard,  
And that she know she hath not heard in vain  
I will tell out what troubles she hath borne  
Before she came here, giving her sure proof  
Of these my words. The greater bulk of things  
I will pass o'er, and to the very goal

identify it, as Mr. Paley does, with the Tartessos of Spain, or Boetis—*Guadalquivir*) that Æschylos followed another legend which placed them in the West. There is possibly a *paronomasia* between Pluto, the God of Hades, and Plutos, the ideal God of riches.

<sup>1</sup> The name was applied by later writers (Quintus Curtius, iv. 7, 22 ; Lucretius, vi. 848) to the fountain in the temple of Jupiter Ammon in the great Oasis. The "river Æthiops" may be purely imaginary, but it may also suggest the possibility of some vague knowledge of the Niger, or more probably of the Nile itself in the upper regions of its course. The "Bybline hills" carry the name Byblos, which we only read of as belonging to a town in the Delta, to the Second Cataract.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Of all thy wanderings go. For when thou cam'st  
To the Molossian plains, and by the grove<sup>1</sup>  
Of lofty-ridged Dodona, and the shrine  
Oracular of Zeus Thesprotian, 850  
And the strange portent of the talking oaks,  
By which full clearly, not in riddle dark,  
Thou wast addressed as noble spouse of Zeus,—  
If aught of pleasure such things give to thee,—  
Thence strung to frenzy, thou did'st rush along  
The sea-coast's path to Rhea's mighty gulf,<sup>2</sup>  
In backward way from whence thou now art vexed,  
And for all time to come that reach of sea,  
Know well, from thee Ionian shall be called,  
To all men record of thy journeyings. 860  
These then are tokens to thee that my mind  
Sees somewhat more than that is manifest.

What follows (*to the Chorus*) I will speak to you and  
her

In common, on the track of former words  
Returning once again. A city stands,  
Canôbos, at its country's furthest bound,  
Hard by the mouth and silt-bank of the Nile ;  
There Zeus shall give thee back thy mind again,<sup>3</sup>  
With hand that works no terror touching thee,—  
Touch only—and thou then shalt bear a child  
Of Zeus begotten, Epaphos, "Touch-born," 870  
Swarthy of hue, whose lot shall be to reap

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Sophocles, *Trachin.*, v. 1168.

<sup>2</sup> The Adriatic or Ionian Gulf.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Suppliants*, Zeus is said to have soothed her, and restored her to her human consciousness by his "divine breathings." The thought underlying the legend may be taken either as a distortion of some primitive tradition, or as one of the "unconscious prophecies" of heathenism. The deliverer is not to be born after the common manner of men, and is to have a divine as well as a human parentage.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

The whole plain watered by the broad-streamed Neilos :  
And in the generation fifth from him  
A household numbering fifty shall return  
Against their will to Argos, in their flight  
From wedlock with their cousins.<sup>1</sup> And they too,  
(Kites but a little space behind the doves)  
With eager hopes pursuing marriage rites  
Beyond pursuit shall come ; and God shall grudge  
To give up their sweet bodies. And the land  
Pelagian<sup>2</sup> shall receive them, when by stroke  
Of woman's murderous hand these men shall lie  
Smitten to death by daring deed of night : 680  
For every bride shall take her husband's life,  
And dip in blood the sharp two-edged sword .  
(So to my foes may Kypris show herself!)<sup>3</sup>  
Yet one of that fair band shall love persuade  
Her husband not to slaughter, and her will  
Shall lose its edge ; and she shall make her choice  
Rather as weak than murderous to be known.  
And she at Argos shall a royal seed  
Bring forth (long speech 'twould take to tell this  
clear) 690  
Famed for his arrows, who shall set me free<sup>4</sup>  
From these my woes. Such was the oracle  
Mine ancient mother Themis, Titan-born,

<sup>1</sup> See the argument of the *Suppliants*, who, as the daughters of Danaos, descended from Epaphos, are here referred to. The passage is noticeable as showing that the theme of that tragedy was already present to the poet's thoughts.

<sup>2</sup> Argos. So in the *Suppliants*, Pelasgos is the mythical king of the Apian land who receives them.

<sup>3</sup> Hypermnestra, who spared Lynceus, and by him became the mother of Abas and a line of Argive kings.

<sup>4</sup> Heracles, who came to Caucasos, and with his arrows slew the eagle that devoured Prometheus.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Gave to me ; but the manner and the means,—  
That needs a lengthy tale to tell the whole,  
And thou can'st nothing gain by learning it.

*Io.* Eleleu ! Oh, Eleleu !<sup>1</sup>

The throbbing pain inflames me, and the mood  
Of frenzy-smitten rage ;  
The gadfly's pointed sting,  
Not forged with fire, attacks,  
And my heart beats against my breast with fear. 900  
Mine eyes whirl round and round :  
Out of my course I'm borne  
By the wild spirit of fierce agony,  
And cannot curb my lips,  
And turbid speech at random dashes on  
Upon the waves of dread calamity.

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Wise, very wise was he  
Who first in thought conceived this maxim sage,  
And spread it with his speech,<sup>2</sup>—  
That the best wedlock is with equals found,  
And that a craftsman, born to work with hands,  
Should not desire to wed  
Or with the soft luxurious heirs of wealth, 910  
Or with the race that boast their lineage high.

### ANTISTROPHE I

Oh ne'er, oh ne'er, dread Fates,  
May ye behold me as the bride of Zeus,  
The partner of his couch,

<sup>1</sup> The word is simply an interjection of pain, but one so characteristic that I have thought it better to reproduce it than to give any English equivalent.

<sup>2</sup> The maxim, "Marry with a woman thine equal," was ascribed to Pittacos.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Nor may I wed with any heaven-born spouse !  
For I shrink back, beholding Io's lot  
Of loveless maidenhood,  
Consumed and smitten low exceedingly  
By the wild wanderings from great Hera sent !

### STROPHE II

To me, when wedlock is on equal terms,  
It gives no cause to fear :  
Ne'er may the love of any of the Gods,  
The strong Gods, look on me  
With glance I cannot 'scape !

820

### ANTISTROPHE II

That fate is war that none can war against,  
Source of resourceless ill ;  
Nor know I what might then become of me :  
I see not how to 'scape  
The counsel deep of Zeus.

*Prom.* Yea, of a truth shall Zeus, though stiff of will,  
Be brought full low. Such bed of wedlock now  
Is he preparing, one to cast him forth  
In darkness from his sovereignty and throne.  
And then the curse his father Cronos spake  
Shall have its dread completion, even that  
He uttered when he left his ancient throne ;  
And from these troubles no one of the Gods  
But me can clearly show the way to 'scape.  
I know the time and manner : therefore now  
Let him sit fearless, in his peals on high  
Putting his trust, and shaking in his hands  
His darts fire-breathing. Nought shall they avail  
'To hinder him from falling shamefully  
A fall intolerable. Such a combatant

830

840



## PROMETHEUS BOUND

He arms against himself, a marvel dread,  
Who shall a fire discover, mightier far  
Than the red levin, and a sound more dread  
Than roaring of the thunder, and shall shiver  
That plague sea-born that causeth earth to quake,  
The trident, weapon of Poseidon's strength :  
And stumbling on this evil, he shall learn  
How far apart a king's lot from a slave's.

*Chor.* What thou dost wish thou mutterest against  
Zeus.

*Prom.* Things that shall be, and things I wish, I  
speak. (50)

*Chor.* And must we look for one to master Zeus?

*Prom.* Yea, troubles harder far than these are his.

*Chor.* Art not afraid to vent such words as these?

*Prom.* What can I fear whose fate is not to die?

*Chor.* But He may send, on thee worse pain than  
this.

*Prom.* So let Him do : nought finds me unprepared.

*Chor.* Wisdom is theirs who Adrasteia worship.<sup>1</sup>

*Prom.* Worship then, praise and flatter him that  
rules ;

My care for Zeus is nought, and less than nought :  
Let Him act, let Him rule this little while, (50)  
E'en as He will ; for long He shall not rule  
Over the Gods. But lo ! I see at hand  
'The courier of the Gods, the minister  
Of our new sovereign. Doubtless he has come  
To bring me tidings of some new device.

<sup>1</sup> The Euhemerism of later scholiasts derived the name from a king Adrastos, who was said to have been the first to build a temple to Nemesis, and so the power thus worshipped was called after his name. A better etymology leads us to see in it the idea of the "inevitable" law of retribution working unseen by men, and independently even of the arbitrary will of the Gods, and bringing destruction upon the proud and haughty.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Enter HERMES*

*Herm.* Thee do I speak to,<sup>1</sup>—thee, the teacher wise,  
The bitterly o'er-bitter, who 'gainst Gods  
Hast sinned in giving gifts to short-lived men—  
I speak to thee, the filcher of bright fire.  
The Father bids thee say what marriage thou  
Dost vaunt, and who shall hurl Him from his might ;  
And this too not in dark mysterious speech, <sup>970</sup>  
But tell each point out clearly. Give me not,  
Prometheus, task of double journey. Zeus  
Thou see'st, is not with such words appeased.

*Prom.* Stately of utterance, full of haughtiness  
Thy speech, as fits a messenger of Gods.  
Ye yet are young in your new rule, and think  
To dwell in painless towers. Have I not  
Seen two great rulers driven forth from thence ?<sup>1</sup>  
And now the third, who reigneth, I shall see  
In basest, quickest fall. Seem I to thee <sup>980</sup>  
To shrink and quail before these new-made Gods ?  
Far, very far from that am I. But thou,  
Track once again the path by which thou camest ;  
Thou shalt learn nought of what thou askest me.

*Herm.* It was by such self-will as this before  
That thou did'st bring these sufferings on thyself.

*Prom.* I for my part, be sure, would never change  
My evil state for that thy bondslave's lot.

*Herm.* 'To be the bondslave of this rock, I trow,  
Is better than to be Zeus' trusty herald ! <sup>990</sup>

*Prom.* So it is meet the insulter to insult.

*Herm.* Thou waxest proud, 'twould seem, of this  
thy doom.

*Prom.* Wax proud ! God grant that I may see my foes  
Thus waxing proud, and thee among the rest !

<sup>1</sup> Comp. *Agam.* 162-6.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Herm.* Dost blame me then for thy calamities?

*Prom.* In one short sentence—all the Gods I hate,  
Who my good turns with evil turns repay.

*Herm.* Thy words prove thee with no slight madness  
plagued.

*Prom.* If to hate foes be madness, mad I am.

*Herm.* Not one could bear thee wert thou pros-  
perous. 1000

*Prom.* Ah me!

*Herm.* That word is all unknown to Zeus.

*Prom.* Time waxing old can many a lesson teach.

*Herm.* Yet thou at least hast not true wisdom learnt.

*Prom.* I had not else addressed a slave like thee.

*Herm.* Thou wilt say nought the Father asks,  
'twould seem.

*Prom.* Fine debt I owe him, favour to repay.

*Herm.* Me as a boy thou scornest then, forsooth.

*Prom.* And art thou not a boy, and sillier far,  
If that thou thinkest to learn aught from me?  
'There is no torture nor device by which 1010

Zeus can impel me to disclose these things  
Before these bonds that outrage me be loosed.  
Let then the blazing levin-flash be hurled;  
With white-winged snow-storm and with earth-born  
thunders

Let Him disturb and trouble all that is;  
Nought of these things shall force me to declare  
Whose hand shall drive him from his sovereignty.

*Herm.* See if thou findest any help in this.

*Prom.* Long since all this I've seen, and formed my  
plans. 1020

*Herm.* O fool, take heart, take heart at last in time,  
To form right thoughts for these thy present woes.

*Prom.* Like one who soothes a wave, thy speech in  
vain

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

Vexes my soul. But deem not thou that I,  
Fearing the will of Zeus, shall e'er become  
As womanised in mind, or shall entreat  
Him whom I greatly loathe, with upturned hand,  
In woman's fashion, from these bonds of mine  
To set me free. Far, far am I from that.

*Herm.* It seems that I, saying much, shall speak in  
vain ;

For thou in nought by prayers art pacified,  
Or softened in thy heart, but like a colt 1030  
Fresh harnessed, thou dost champ thy bit, and strive,  
And fight against the reins. Yet thou art stiff  
In weak device ; for self-will, by itself,  
In one who is not wise, is less than nought.  
Look to it, if thou disobey my words,  
How great a storm and triple wave of ills,<sup>1</sup>  
Not to be 'scaped, shall come on thee ; for first,  
With thunder and the levin's blazing flash  
The Father this ravine of rock shall crush,  
And shall thy carcase hide, and stern embrace  
Of stony arms shall keep thee in thy place. 1040  
And having traversed space of time full long,  
Thou shalt come back to light, and then his hound,  
The winged hound of Zeus, the ravening eagle,  
Shall greedily make banquet of thy flesh,  
Coming all day an uninvited guest,  
And glut himself upon thy liver dark.  
And of that anguish look not for the end,  
Before some God shall come to bear thy woes,  
And will to pass to Hades' sunless realm,

<sup>1</sup> Either a mere epithet of intensity, as in our " thrice blest," or rising from the supposed fact that every third wave was larger and more impetuous than the others, like the *fluctus decumanus* of the Latins, or from the sequence of three great waves which some have noted as a common phenomenon in storms.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

And the dark cloudy depths of Tartaros.<sup>1</sup> 1050  
Wherefore take heed. No feigned boast is this,  
But spoken all too truly, for the lips  
Of Zeus know not to speak a lying speech,  
But will perform each single word. And thou,  
Search well, be wise, nor think that self-willed pride  
Shall ever better prove than counsel good.

*Chor.* To us doth Hermes seem to utter words  
Not out of season ; for he bids thee quit  
Thy self-willed pride and seek for counsel good.  
Hearken thou to him. To the wise of soul  
It is foul shame to sin persistently. 1061

*Prom.* To me who knew it all  
He hath this message borne ;  
And that a foe from foes  
Should suffer is not strange.  
Therefore on me be hurled  
The sharp-edged wreath of fire ;  
And let heaven's vault be stirred  
With thunder and the blasts  
Of fiercest winds ; and Earth  
From its foundations strong,  
E'en to its deepest roots,  
Let storm-wind make to rock ;  
And let the Ocean wave,  
With wild and foaming surge,  
Be heaped up to the paths 1070  
Where move the stars of heaven ;  
And to dark Tartaros  
Let Him my carcase hurl,

<sup>1</sup> Here again we have a strange shadowing forth of the mystery of Atonement, and what we have learnt to call "vicarious" satisfaction. In the later legend, Cheiron, suffering from the agony of his wounds, resigns his immortality, and submits to die in place of the ever-living death to which Prometheus was doomed.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

With mighty blasts of force :  
Yet me He shall not slay.

*Herm.* Such words and thoughts from one  
Brain-stricken one may hear.  
What space divides his state  
From frenzy ? What repose  
Hath he from maddened rage ?  
But ye who pitying stand  
And share his bitter griefs,  
Quickly from hence depart ;  
Lest the relentless roar  
Of thunder stun your soul.

1080

*Chor.* With other words attempt  
To counsel and persuade ;  
And I will hear : for now  
Thou hast this word thrust in  
That we may never bear.  
How dost thou bid me train  
My soul to baseness vile ?  
With him I will endure  
Whatever is decreed.  
Traitors I've learnt to hate,  
Nor is there any plague  
That more than this I loathe.

1081

*Herm.* Nay then, remember ye  
What now I say, nor blame  
Your fortune : never say  
That Zeus hath cast you down  
To evil not foreseen.  
Not so ; ye cast yourselves :  
For now with open eyes,  
Not taken unawares,  
In Atë's endless net  
Ye shall entangled be  
By folly of your own.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

[*A pause, and then flashes of lightning and  
peals of thunder*<sup>1</sup>

*Prom.* Yea, now in very deed,  
No more in word alone,  
The earth shakes to and fro,  
And the loud thunder's voice  
Bellows hard by, and blaze  
The flashing levin-fires ;  
And tempests whirl the dust,  
And gusts of all wild winds  
On one another leap,  
In wild conflicting blasts,  
And sky with sea is blent :  
Such is the storm from Zeus  
That comes as working fear,  
In terrors manifest.  
O Mother venerable !  
O Æther ! rolling round  
The common light of all,  
See'st thou what wrongs I bear ?

111)

<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable that both Æschylos and Sophocles have left us tragedies which end in a thunderstorm as an element of effect. But the contrast between the *Prometheus* and the *Œdipus at Colonus* as to the impression left in the one case of serene reconciliation, and in the other of violent antagonism, is hardly less striking than the resemblance in the outward phenomena which are common to the two.

# THE SUPPLIANTS

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| DANAOS | PELASGOS, <i>king of Argos</i>           |
| Herald | <i>Chorus of the daughters of DANAOS</i> |

*ARGUMENT.*—When Io, after many wanderings, had found refuge in Egypt, and having been touched by Zeus, had given birth to Epaphos, it came to pass that he and his descendants ruled over the region of Canôpos, near one of the seven mouths of Neilos. And in the fifth generation there were two brothers, Danaos and Ægyptos, the sons of Belos, and the former had fifty daughters and the latter fifty sons, and Ægyptos sought the daughters of Danaos in marriage for his sons. And they, looking on the marriage as unholy, and hating those who wooed them, took flight and came to Argos, where Pelasgos then ruled as king, as to the land whence Io, from whom they sprang, had come. And thither the sons of Ægyptos followed them in hot pursuit.





## THE SUPPLIANTS

SCENE.—Argos, the entrance of the gates. Statues of Zeus,  
ARTEMIS, and other Gods, placed against the walls

*Enter Chorus of the Daughters of DANAOS,<sup>1</sup> in the dress of Egyptian women, with the boughs of suppliants in their hands, and fillets of white wool twisted round them, chanting as they move in procession to take up their position round the thymele*

Zeus, the God of Suppliants, kindly  
Look on this our band of wanderers,  
That from banks at mouths of Neilos,  
Banks of finest sand, departed!<sup>2</sup>  
Yea, we left the region sacred,  
Grassy plain on Syria's borders,<sup>3</sup>  
Not for guilt of blood to exile  
By our country's edict sentenced,  
But with free choice, loathing wedlock,  
Fleeing marriage-rites unholy  
With the children of Ægyptos.  
And our father Danaos, ruler,  
Chief of council, chief of squadrons,

10

<sup>1</sup> The daughters of Danaos are always represented as fifty in number. It seems probable, however, that the vocal chorus was limited to twelve, the others appearing as mutes.

<sup>2</sup> The alluvial deposit of the Delta.

<sup>3</sup> Syria is used obviously with a certain geographical vagueness, as including all that we know as Palestine, and the wilderness to the south of it, and so as continuous with Egypt.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Playing moves on fortune's draught-board,<sup>1</sup>  
Chose what seemed the best of evils,  
Through the salt sea-waves to hasten,  
Steering to the land of Argos,  
Whence our race has risen to greatness;  
Sprung, so boasts it, from the heifer  
Whom the stinging gadfly harassed,  
By the touch of Zeus love-breathing:<sup>2</sup>  
And to what land more propitious  
Could we come than this before us, 20  
Holding in our hand the branches  
Suppliant, wreathed with white wool fillets?  
O State! O land! O water gleaming!  
Ye the high Gods, ye the awful,  
In the dark the graves still guarding;  
Thou too with them, Zeus Preserver,<sup>3</sup>  
Guardian of the just man's dwelling,  
Welcome with the breath of pity,  
Pity as from these shores wafted,  
Us poor women who are suppliants.  
And that swarm of men that follow,  
Haughty offspring of Ægyptos, 30  
Ere they set their foot among you  
On this silt-strown shore,<sup>4</sup>—oh, send them

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in Æschylos (*Agam.* 33, *Fr.* 132) we trace allusion to games played with dice. Here we have a reference to one, the details of which are not accurately known to us, but which seems to have been analogous to draughts or chess.

<sup>2</sup> See the whole story, given as in prophecy, in the *Prometheus*, v. 865-880.

<sup>3</sup> The invocation is addressed—(1) to the Olympian Gods in the brightness of heaven; (2) to the Chthonian deities in the darkness below the earth; (3) to Zeus, the preserver, as the supreme Lord of both.

<sup>4</sup> An Athenian audience would probably recognise in this a description of the swanpy meadows near the coast of Lerna.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Seaward in their ship swift-rowing ;  
There, with whirlwind tempest-driven,  
There, with lightning and with thunder,  
There, with blasts that bring the storm-rain,  
May they in the fierce sea perish,  
Ere they, cousin-brides possessing,  
Rest on marriage-beds reluctant,  
Which the voice of right denies them !

### STROPHE I

And now I call on him, the Zeus-sprung steer,<sup>1</sup> “  
Our true protector, far beyond the sea,  
Child of the heifer-foundress of our line,  
    Who cropped the flowery mead,  
Born of the breath, and named from touch of Zeus.  
    \* And lo ! the destined time  
    \* Wrought fully with the name,  
And she brought forth the “Touch-born,” Epaphos.

### ANTISTROPHE I

And now invoking him in grassy fields, 50  
Where erst his mother strayed, to dwellers here  
Telling the tale of all her woes of old,  
    I surest pledge shall give ;  
And others, strange beyond all fancy's dream,  
    Shall yet perchance be found ;  
    And in due course of time  
Shall men know clearly all our history.

The descendants of Io had come to the very spot where the tragic history of their ancestors had had its origin.

<sup>1</sup> The invocation passes on to Epaphos, as a guardian deity able and willing to succour his afflicted children.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

### STROPHE II

And if some augur of the land be near,  
Hearing our piteous cry,  
Sure he will deem he hears  
The voice of 'Tereus' bride,<sup>1</sup>  
Piteous and sad of soul,  
'The nightingale sore harassed by the kite. 60

### ANTISTROPHE II

\*For she, driven back from wonted haunts and streams,<sup>2</sup>  
Mourns with a strange new plaint  
The home that she has lost,  
And wails her son's sad doom,  
How he at her hand died,  
Meeting with evil wrath unmotherly ;

### STROPHE III

E'en so do I, to wailing all o'er-given,  
In plaintive music of Ionian mood,<sup>3</sup>  
\*Vex the soft cheek on Neilos' banks that bloomed,  
And heart that bursts in tears,  
And pluck the flowers of lamentations loud,  
Not without fear of friends, 70  
\*Lest none should care to help  
This flight of mine from that mist-shrouded shore.

### ANTISTROPHE III

But, O ye Gods ancestral ! hear my prayer,  
Look well upon the justice of our cause,

<sup>1</sup> Philomela See the tale as given in the notes to *Agam.* 1113.

<sup>2</sup> "Streams," as flowing through the shady solitude of the groves which the nightingale frequented.

<sup>3</sup> "Ionian," as soft and elegiac, in contrast with the more military character of Dorian music.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Nor grant to youth to gain its full desire  
    Against the laws of right,  
But with prompt hate of lust, our marriage bless.  
    \*Even for those who come  
    As fugitives in war  
The altar serves as shield that Gods regard.

### STROPHE IV

May God good issue give !<sup>1</sup> 86  
And yet the will of Zeus is hard to scan :  
    Through all it brightly gleams,  
E'en though in darkness and the gloom of chance  
    For us poor mortals wrapt.

### ANTISTROPHE IV

Safe, by no fall tripped up,  
The full-wrought deed decreed by brow of Zeus ;  
    For dark with shadows stretch  
The pathways of the counsels of his heart,  
    And difficult to see.

### STROPHE V

And from high-towering hopes He hurleth down 90  
To utter doom the heir of mortal birth ;  
    Yet sets He in array  
    No forces violent ;  
All that Gods work is effortless and calm :  
    Seated on holiest throne,  
    Thence, though we know not how,  
    He works His perfect will.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek the *paronomasia* turns upon the supposed etymological connection between *θεός* and *τιθίμι*. I have here, as elsewhere, attempted an analogous rather than identical *jeu de mot*.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

### ANTISTROPHE V

Ah, let him look on frail man's wanton pride,  
With which the old stock burgeons out anew,  
    By love for me constrained,  
    In counsels ill and rash, 100  
And in its frenzied, passionate resolve  
    Finds goad it cannot shun ;  
    But in deceived hopes,  
    Shall know, too late, its woe.

### STROPHE VI

Such bitter griefs, lamenting, I recount,  
    With cries shrill, tearful, deep,  
    (Ah woe! ah woe!)  
That strike the ear with mourner's woe-fraught cry.  
Though yet alive, I wail mine obsequies ;  
    Thee, Apian sea-girt bluff,<sup>1</sup>  
    I greet (our alien speech  
    Thou knowest well, O land,) 110  
And oft-times fall, with rendings passionate,  
On robe of linen and Sidonian veil.

### ANTISTROPHE VI

But to the Gods, for all things prospering well,  
    When death is kept aloof,  
    Gifts votive come of right.  
    Ah woe! Ah woe!  
Oh, troubles dark, and hard to understand!

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word which I have translated "bluff" was one not familiar to Attic ears, and was believed to be of Kyrenean origin. Æschylos accordingly puts it into the lips of the daughters of Danaos, as characteristic more or less of the "alien speech" of the land from which they came.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Ah, whither will these waters carry me?

    Thee, Apian sea-girt bluff,

120

    I greet (our alien speech

    Thou knowest well, O land,)

And oftentimes fall, with rendings passionate,

On robe of linen and Sidonian veil.

### STROPHE VII

The oar indeed and dwelling, timber-wrought,

With sails of canvas, 'gainst the salt sea proof

    Brought me with favouring gales,

    By stormy wind unvexed ;

Nor have I cause for murmur. Issues good

May He, the all-seeing Father, grant, that I,

130

    Great seed of Mother dread,

In time may 'scape, still maiden undefiled,

    My suitor's marriage-bed.

### ANTISTROPHE VII

And with a will that meets my will may She,

The unstained child of Zeus, on me look down,

    \*Our Artemis, who guards

    The consecrated walls ;

And with all strength, though hunted down, uncaught,

May She, the Virgin, me a virgin free,

140

    Great seed of Mother dread,

That I may 'scape, still maiden undefiled,

    My suitor's marriage-bed.

### STROPHE VIII

But if this may not be,

We, of swarth sun-burnt race,



## THE SUPPLIANTS

Will with our suppliant branches go to him,  
     Zeus, sovereign of the dead,<sup>1</sup>  
 The Lord that welcomes all that come to him,  
     Dying by twisted noose 150  
 If we the grace of Gods Olympian miss.  
 By thine ire, Zeus, 'gainst Io virulent,  
     The Gods' wrath seeks us out,  
     And I know well the woe  
 Comes from thy queen who reigns in heaven victorious ;  
     For after stormy wind  
     The tempest needs must rage.

### ANTISTROPHE VIII

And then shall Zeus to words  
     Unseemly be exposed,  
 Having the heifer's offspring put to shame, 160  
     Whom he himself begat,  
 And now his face averting from our prayers :  
     Ah, may he hear on high,  
 Yea, pitying look and hear propitiously !  
 By thine ire, Zeus, 'gainst Io virulent,  
     The Gods' wrath seeks us out,  
     And I know well the woe  
 Comes from thy queen, who reigns in heaven victorious ;  
     For after stormy wind 170  
     The tempest needs must rage,  
*Danaos.* My children, we need wisdom ; lo ! ye came  
 With me, your father wise and old and true,  
 As guardian of your voyage. Now ashore,  
 With forethought true I bid you keep my words,

<sup>1</sup> So in v. 235 Danaos speaks of the "second Zeus" who sits as Judge in Hades. The feeling to which the Chorus gives utterance is that of—

"Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

## THE SUPPLIANTS

As in a tablet-book recording them :  
 I see a dust, an army's voiceless herald,  
 Nor are the axles silent as they turn ;  
 And I descry a host that bear the shield,  
 And those that hurl the javelin, marching on  
 With horses and with curvèd battle-cars.  
 Perchance they are the princes of this land, 181  
 Come on the watch, as having news of us ;  
 But whether one in kindly mood, or hot  
 With anger fierce, leads on this great array,  
 It is, my children, best on all accounts  
 To take your stand hard by this hill of Gods  
 Who rule o'er conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Better far than towers  
 Are altars, yea, a shield impenetrable.  
 But with all speed approach the shrine of Zeus,  
 'The God of mercy, in your left hand holding  
 The suppliants' boughs wool-wreathed, in solemn guise,<sup>2</sup>  
 And greet our hosts as it is meet for us, 180  
 Coming as strangers, with all dutious words  
 Kindly and holy, telling them your tale  
 Of this your flight, unstained by guilt of blood ;  
 And with your speech, let mood not over-bold,  
 Nor vain nor wanton, shine from modest brow  
 And calm, clear eye. And be not prompt to speak,  
 Nor full of words ; the race that dwelleth here  
 Of this is very jealous :<sup>3</sup> and be mindful  
 Much to concede ; a fugitive thou art,

<sup>1</sup> Some mound dedicated to the Gods, with one or more altars and statues of the Gods on it, is on the stage, and the suppliants are told to take up their places there. The Gods of conflict who are named below, Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, presided generally over the three great games of Greece. Hermes is added to the list.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. *Libation-Pourers*, 1024, *Eumen.* 44.

<sup>3</sup> The Argives are supposed to share the love of brevity which we commonly connect with their neighbours the Laconians.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

A stranger and in want, and 'tis not meet  
That those in low estate, high words should speak.

*Chor.* My father, to the prudent prudently 200  
Thou speakest, and my task shall be to keep  
Thy goodly precepts. Zeus, our sire, look on us!

*Dan.* Yea, may He look with favourable eye!

*Chor.* I fain would take my seat not far from thee.  
[*Chorus moves to the altar not far from*

DANAOS

*Dan.* Delay not then; success go with your plan.

*Chor.* Zeus, pity us with sorrow all but crushed!

*Dan.* If He be willing, all shall turn out well.

*Chor.*

*Dan.* Invoke ye now the mighty bird of Zeus.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* We call the sun's bright rays to succour us.

*Dau.* Apollo too, the holy, in that He, 210  
A God, has tasted exile from high heaven.<sup>2</sup>

*Chor.* Knowing that fate, He well may feel for men.

*Dan.* So may He feel, and look on us benignly!

*Chor.* Whom of the Gods shall I besides invoke?

*Dan.* I see this trident here, a God's great symbol.<sup>3</sup>

*Chor.* Well hath He brought us, well may He receive!

*Dan.* Here too is Hermes,<sup>4</sup> as the Hellenes know him.

<sup>1</sup> The "mighty bird of Zeus" seems here, from the answer of the Chorus, to mean not the "eagle" but the "sun," which roused men from their sleep as the cock did, so that "cock-crow" and "sunrise" were synonymous. It is, in any case, striking that Zeus, rather than Apollo, appears as the Sun-God.

<sup>2</sup> The words refer to the myth of Apollo's banishment from heaven and servitude under Admetos.

<sup>3</sup> In the Acropolis at Athens the impress of a trident was seen on the rock, and was believed to commemorate the time when Poseidon had claimed it as his own by setting up his weapon there. Something of the same kind seems here to be supposed to exist at Argos, where a like legend prevailed.

<sup>4</sup> The Hellenic Hermes is distinguished from his Egyptian counterpart, Thoth, as being different in form and accessories,

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Chor.* To us, as free, let Him good herald prove.

*Dan.* Yea, and the common shrine of all these Gods  
Adore ye, and in holy precincts sit,  
Like swarms of doves in fear of kites your kinsmen, <sup>220</sup>  
Foes of our blood, polluters of our race.  
How can bird prey on bird and yet be pure?  
And how can he be pure who seeks in marriage  
Unwilling bride from father too unwilling?  
Nay, not in Hades' self, shall he, vain fool,  
Though dead, 'scape sentence, doing deeds like this;  
For there, as men relate, a second Zeus<sup>1</sup>  
Judges men's evil deeds, and to the dead  
Assigns their last great penalties. Look up,  
And take your station here, that this your cause  
May win its way to a victorious end.

*Enter the KING on his chariot, followed by Attendants*

*King.* Whence comes this crowd, this non-Hellenic  
band, <sup>230</sup>

In robes and raiment of barbaric fashion  
So gorgeously attired, whom now we speak to?  
This woman's dress is not of Argive mode,  
Nor from the climes of Hellas. How ye dared,  
Without a herald even or protector,  
Yea, and devoid of guides too, to come hither  
Thus boldly, is to me most wonderful.  
And yet these boughs, as is the suppliant's wont,  
Are set by you before the Gods of conflicts:  
By this alone will Hellas guess aright.  
Much more indeed we might have else conjectured, <sup>240</sup>  
Were there no voice to tell me on the spot.

*Chor.* Not false this speech of thine about our garb;

<sup>1</sup> A possible reference to the Egyptian Osiris, as lord or judge of Hades. Comp. v. 145.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

But shall I greet thee as a citizen,  
Or bearing Hermes' rod, or city ruling?<sup>1</sup>

*King.* Nay, for that matter, answer thou and speak  
Without alarm. Palæchthon's son am I,  
Earth-born, the king of this Pelasgic land;  
And named from me, their king,<sup>2</sup> as well might be,  
The race Pelasgic reaps our country's fruits;  
\*And all the land through which the Strymon pours <sup>250</sup>  
Its pure, clear waters to the West I rule;  
And as the limits of my realm I mark  
The land of the Perrhæbi, and the climes  
Near the Pæonians, on the farther side  
Of Pindos, and the Dodonæan heights;<sup>3</sup>  
And the sea's waters form its bounds. O'er all  
Within these coasts I govern; and this plain,  
The Apian land, itself has gained its name  
Long since from one who as a healer lived;<sup>4</sup>  
For Apis, coming from Naupactian land  
That lies beyond the straits, Apollo's son,  
Prophet and healer, frees this land of ours <sup>260</sup>  
From man-destroying monsters, which the soil,  
Polluted with the guilt of blood of old,  
By anger of the Gods, brought forth,—fierce plagues,

<sup>1</sup> "Shall I," the Chorus asks, "speak to you as a private citizen, or as a herald, or as a king?"

<sup>2</sup> It would appear from this that the king himself bore the name Pelasgos. In some versions of the story he is so designated.

<sup>3</sup> The lines contain a tradition of the wide extent of the old Pelasgic rule, including Thessalia, or the Pelasgic Argos, between the mouths of Peneus and Pindos, Perrhæbia, Dodona, and finally the Apian land or Peloponnesos.

<sup>4</sup> The true meaning of the word "Apian," as applied to the Peloponnesos, seems to have been "distant." Here the myth is followed which represented it as connected with Apis the son of Telchin (son of Apollo, in the sense of being a physician-prophet), who had freed the land from monsters.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

The dragon-brood's dread, unblest company ;  
And Apis, having for this Argive land  
Duly wrought out his saving surgery,  
Gained his reward, remembered in our prayers ;  
And thou, this witness having at my hands,  
May'st tell thy race at once, and further speak ;  
Yet lengthened speech our city loveth not.

*Chor.* Full short and clear our tale. We boast that we  
Are Argives in descent, the children true 270  
Of the fair, fruitful heifer. And all this  
Will I by what I speak show firm and true.

*King.* Nay, strangers, what ye tell is past belief  
For me to hear, that ye from Argos spring ;  
For ye to Libyan women are most like,<sup>1</sup>  
And nowise to our native maidens here.  
Such race might Neilos breed, and Kyprian mould,  
Like yours, is stamped by skilled artificers  
On women's features ; and I hear that those  
Of India travel upon camels borne, 275  
Swift as the horse, yet trained as sumpter-mules,  
E'en those who as the Æthiops' neighbours dwell.  
And had ye borne the bow, I should have guessed,  
Undoubting, ye were of th' Amâzon's tribe,  
Man-hating, flesh-devouring. Taught by you,  
I might the better know how this can be,  
'That your descent and birth from Argos come.

*Chor.* They tell of one who bore the temple-keys  
Of Hera, Io, in this Argive land.

*King.* So was't indeed, and wide the fame prevails :  
And was it said that Zeus a mortal loved ? 280

*Chor.* And that embrace was not from Hera hid.

<sup>1</sup> The description would seem to indicate—(1) that the daughter of Danaos appeared on the stage as of swarthy complexion ; and (2) that Indians, Æthiopians, Kyprians, and Amazons, were all thought of as in this respect alike.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*King.* What end had then these strifes of sovereign  
Ones ?

*Chor.* The Argive goddess made the maid a heifer.

*King.* Did Zeus that fair-horned heifer still  
approach ?

*Chor.* So say they, fashioned like a wooing steer.

*King.* How acted then the mighty spouse of Zeus ?

*Chor.* She o'er the heifer set a guard all-seeing.

*King.* What herdsman strange, all-seeing, speak'st  
thou of ?

*Chor.* Argos, the earth-born, him whom Hermes  
slew. 891

*King.* What else then wrought she on the ill-starred  
heifer ?

*Chor.* She sent a stinging gadfly to torment her.

[Those who near Neilos dwell an *æstros* call it.]

*King.* Did she then drive her from her country far ?

*Chor.* All that thou say'st agrees well with our tale.

*King.* And did she to Canôbos go, and Memphis ?

*Chor.* Zeus with his touch, an offspring then begets.

*King.* What Zeus-born calf that heifer claims as  
mother ?

*Chor.* \*He from that touch which freed named Epa-  
phos. 311

*King.* [*What offspring then did Epaphos beget ?*]<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* Libya, that gains her fame from greatest land.

*King.* What other offspring, born of her, dost tell of ?

*Chor.* Sire of my sire here, Belos, with two sons.

*King.* Tell me then now the name of yonder sage.

*Chor.* Danaos, whose brother boasts of fifty sons.

*King.* Tell me his name, too, with ungrudging  
speech.

<sup>1</sup> The line is conjectural, but some question of this kind is implied in the answer of the Chorus.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Chor.* Ægyptos : knowing now our ancient stock,  
Take heed thou bid thine Argive suppliants rise.

*King.* Ye seem, indeed, to make your ancient claim  
To this our country good : but how came ye 320  
To leave your father's house ? What chance constrained you ?

*Chor.* O king of the Pelasgi, manifold  
Are ills of mortals, and thou could'st not find  
The self-same form of evil anywhere.  
Who would have said that this unlooked-for flight  
Would bring to Argos race once native here,  
Driving them forth in hate of wedlock's couch ?

*King.* What seek'st thou then of these the Gods of  
conflicts,  
Holding your wool-wreathed branches newly-plucked ?

*Chor.* That I serve not Ægyptos' sons as slave.

*King.* Speak'st thou of some old feud, or breach of 330  
right ?

*Chor.* Nay, who'd find fault with master that one  
loved ?

*King.* Yet thus it is that mortals grow in strength.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* True ; when men fail, 'tis easy to desert  
them.

*King.* How then to you may I act reverently ?

*Chor.* Yield us not up unto Ægyptos' sons.

*King.* Hard boon thou ask'st, to wage so strange a war.

*Chor.* Nay, Justice champions those who fight with  
her.

*King.* Yes, if her hand was in it from the first.

*Chor.* Yet reverence thou the state-ship's stern thus  
wreathed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By sacrificing personal likings to schemes of ambition, men and women contract marriages which increase their power.

<sup>2</sup> The Gods of conflict are the pilots of the ship of the State. The altar dedicated to them is as its stern : the garlands and



## THE SUPPLIANTS

*King.* I tremble as I see these seats thus shadowed. 340

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Dread is the wrath of Zeus, the God of suppliants :

Son of Palæchthon, hear ;  
Hear, O Pelasgic king, with kindly heart.  
Behold me suppliant, exile, wanderer,  
\*Like heifer chased by wolves  
Upon the lofty crags,  
Where, trusting in her strength,  
She lifteth up her voice

And to the shepherd tells her tale of grief.

*King.* I see, o'ershadowed with the new-plucked boughs,

\*Bent low, a band these Gods of conflict own ;  
And may our dealings with these home-sprung strangers 350

Be without peril, nor let strife arise  
To this our country for unlooked-for chance  
And unprovided ! This our State wants not.

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* Yea, may that Law that guards the suppliant's right

Free this our flight from harm,  
Law, sprung from Zeus, supreme Apportioner,  
But thou, [*to the King,*] though old, from me, though  
younger, learn :

If thou a suppliant pity  
Thou ne'er shalt penury know,  
So long as Gods receive

wands of suppliants, which adorn it are as the decorations of the vessels.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Within their sacred shrines  
Gifts at the hands of worshipper unstained.

*King.* It is not at my hearth ye suppliant sit ;  
But if the State be as a whole defiled, 360  
Be it the people's task to work the cure.  
I cannot pledge my promise to you first  
Ere I have counselled with my citizens.<sup>1</sup>

### STROPHE II

*Chor.* Thou art the State—yea, thou the common-  
wealth,  
Chief lord whom none may judge ;  
'Tis thine to rule the country's altar-hearth,  
With the sole vote of thy prevailing nod ;  
And thou on throne of state,  
Sole-sceptred in thy sway,  
Bringest each matter to its destined end ;  
Shun thou the curse of guilt.

*King.* Upon my foes rest that dread curse of guilt! 370  
Yet without harm I cannot succour you,  
Nor gives it pleasure to reject your prayers.  
In a sore strait am I ; fear fills my soul  
To take the chance, to do or not to do.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* Look thou on Him who looks on all from  
heaven,  
Guardian of suffering men  
Who, worn with toil, unto their neighbours come

<sup>1</sup> Some editors have seen in this an attempt to enlist the constitutional sympathies of an Athenian audience in favour of the Argive king, who will not act without consulting his assembly. There seems more reason to think that the aim of the dramatist was in precisely the opposite direction, and that the words which follow set forth his admiration for the king who can act, as compared with one who is tied and hampered by restrictions.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

As suppliants, and receive not justice due:

For these the wrath of Zeus,  
Zeus, the true suppliant's God,  
Abides, by wail of sufferer unappeased. 289

*King.* Yet if Ægyptos' sons have claim on thee  
By their State's law, asserting that they come  
As next of kin, who dare oppose their right?  
Thou must needs plead that by thy laws at home  
They over thee have no authority.<sup>1</sup>

### STROPHE III

*Chor.* Ah! may I ne'er be captive to the might  
Of males! Where'er the stars  
Are seen in heaven, I track my way in flight,  
As refuge from a marriage that I hate.  
But thou, make Right thy friend,  
And honour what the Gods count pure and true. 290

*King.* Hard is the judgment: choose not me as judge.  
But, as I said before, I may not act  
Without the people, sovereign though I be,  
Lest the crowd say, should aught fall out amiss,  
"In honouring strangers, thou the State did'st ruin."

### ANTISTROPHE III

*Chor.* Zeus, the great God of kindred, in these things  
Watches o'er both of us,

<sup>1</sup> By an Attic law, analogous in principle to that of the Jews, (Num. xxxvi. 8; 1 Chron. xxiii. 22), heiresses were absolutely bound to marry their next of kin, if he claimed his right. The king at once asserts this as the law which was *prima facie* applicable to the case, and declares himself ready to surrender it if the petitioners can show that their own municipal law is on the other side. He will not thrust his country's customs upon foreigners, who can prove that they live under a different rule, but in the absence of evidence must act on the law which he is bound officially to recognise.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Holding an equal scale, and fitly giving  
To the base evil, to the righteous blessing.

Why, when these things are set  
In even balance, fear'st thou to do right? 400

*King.* Deep thought we need that brings deliverance,  
That, like a diver, mine eye too may plunge  
Clear-seeing to the depths, not wine-bedrenched,  
That these things may be harmless to the State,  
And to ourselves may issue favourably :  
That neither may the strife make you its prey,  
Nor that we give you up, who thus are set  
Near holy seat of Gods, and so bring in  
To dwell with us the Avenger terrible, 410  
God that destroyeth, who not e'en in Hades  
Gives freedom to the dead. Say, think ye not  
That there is need of counsel strong to save?

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Take heed to it, and be  
Friend to the stranger wholly faithful found ;  
Desert not thou the poor,  
Driven from afar by godless violence.

### ANTISTROPHE I

See me not dragged away,  
O thou that rul'st the land! from seat of Gods :  
Know thou men's wanton pride, 420  
And guard thyself against the wrath of Zeus.

### STROPHE II

Endure not thou to see thy suppliant,  
Despite of law, torn off,  
As horses by their frontlets, from the forms  
Of sculptured deities,

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Nor yet the outrage of their wanton hands,  
Seizing these brodered robes.

### ANTISTRÖPHE II

For know thou well, whichever course thou take,  
Thy sons and all thy house

\*Must pay in war the debt that Justice claims,  
Proportionate in kind. 437

Lay well to heart these edicts, wise and true,  
Given by great Zeus himself.

*King.* Well then have I thought o'er it. To this  
point

Our ship's course drives. Fierce war we needs must risk  
Either with these (*pointing to the Gods*) or those. Set  
fast and firm

Is this as is the ship tight wedged in stocks ;  
And without trouble there's no issue out.

For wealth indeed, were our homes spoiled of that,  
'There might come other, thanks to Zeus the Giver,  
More than the loss, and filling up the freight ; 440

And if the tongue should aim its adverse darts,  
Baleful and over-stimulant of wrath,  
'There might be words those words to heal and soothe.

But how to blot the guilt of kindred blood,  
'This needs a great atonement—many victims  
Falling to many Gods—to heal the woe.

\*I take my part, and turn aside from strife ;

And I far rather would be ignorant

Than wise, forecasting evil. May the end,

Against my judgment, show itself as good !

*Chor.* Hear, then, the last of all our pleas for pity.

*King.* I hear ; speak on. It shall not 'scape my  
heed. 450

*Chor.* Girdles I have, and zones that bind my robes.

*King.* Such things are fitting for a woman's state.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Chor.* With these then, know, as good and rare device . . . .

*King.* Nay, speak. What word is this thou'lt utter now ?

*Chor.* Unless thou giv'st our band thy plighted word . . . .

*King.* What wilt thou do with this device of girdles ?

*Chor.* With tablets new these sculptures we'll adorn.

*King.* Thou speak'st a riddle. Make thy meaning plain.

*Chor.* Upon these Gods we'll hang ourselves at once.

*King.* I hear a word which pierces to the heart. <sup>460</sup>

*Chor.* Thou see'st our meaning. Eyes full clear I've given.

*King.* Lo then ! in many ways sore troubles come.  
A host of evils rushes like a flood ;  
A sea of woe none traverse, fathomless,  
'This have I entered ; haven there is none.  
For if I fail to do this work for you,  
'Thou tellest of defilement unsurpassed ;<sup>1</sup>  
And if for thee against Ægyptos' sons,  
'Thy kindred, I before my city's walls  
In conflict stand, how can there fail to be  
A bitter loss, to stain the earth with blood 470  
Of man for woman's sake ? And yet I needs  
Must fear the wrath of Zeus, the suppliant's God ;  
That dread is mightiest with the sons of men.  
'Thou, then, O aged father of these maidens !  
'Taking forthwith these branches in thine arms,  
Lay them on other altars of the Gods  
Our country worships, that the citizens  
May all behold this token of thy coming,

<sup>1</sup> *Sc.*, the pollution which the statues of the Gods would contract if they carried into execution their threat of suicide.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

And about me let no rash speech be dropped ;  
For 'tis a people prompt to blame their rulers.  
And then perchance some one beholding them, 480  
And pitying, may wax wrathful 'gainst the outrage  
Of that male troop, and with more kindly will  
The people look on you ; for evermore  
Men all wish well unto the weaker side.

*Dan.* This boon is counted by us of great price,  
To find a patron proved so merciful.  
And thou, send with us guides to lead us on,  
And tell us how before their shrines to find  
The altars of the Gods that guard the State,  
\*And holy places columned round about ;  
And safety for us, as the town we traverse.  
Not of like fashion is our features' stamp ; 490  
For Neilos rears not race like Inachos.<sup>1</sup>  
Take heed lest rashness lead to bloodshed here ;  
Ere now, unknowing, men have slain their friends.

*King (to Attendants).* Go then, my men ; full well  
the stranger speaks ;  
And lead him where the city's altars stand,  
The seats of Gods ; and see ye talk not much  
To passers-by as ye this traveller lead,  
A suppliant at the altar-hearth of Gods.

[*Exeunt DANAOS and Attendants*]

*Chor.* 'Thou speak'st to him ; and may he go as  
bidden !

But what shall I do ? What hope giv'st thou me ?

*King.* Leave here those boughs, the token of your  
grief. 500

*Chor.* Lo ! here I leave them at thy beck and  
word.

<sup>1</sup> Inachos, the river-God of Argos, and as such contrasted with Neilos.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*King.* Now turn thy steps towards this open lawn.

*Chor.* What shelter gives a lawn unconsecrate ?<sup>1</sup>

*King.* We will not yield thee up to birds of prey.

*Chor.* Nay, but to foes far worse than fiercest dragons.

*King.* Good words should come from those who good have heard.

*Chor.* No wonder they wax hot whom fear enthral.

*King.* But dread is still for rulers all unmeet.

*Chor.* Do thou then cheer our soul by words and deeds.

*King.* Nay, no long time thy sire will leave thee lorn ;

510

And I, all people of the land convening,  
Will the great mass persuade to kindly words ;  
And I will teach thy father what to say.  
Wherefore remain and ask our country's Gods,  
With suppliant prayers, to grant thy soul's desire,  
And I will go in furtherance of thy wish :  
Sweet Suasion follow us, and Fortune good ! [Exit

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* O King of kings ! and blest  
Above all blessed ones,

And Power most mighty of the mightiest !  
O Zeus, of high estate !

520

Hear thou and grant our prayer !  
Drive thou far off the wantonness of men,  
The pride thou hatest sore,

<sup>1</sup> i.e., "Unconsecrate," marked out by no barriers, accessible to all, and therefore seeming to offer but little prospect of a safe asylum. The place described seems to have been an open piece of turf rather than a grove of trees.



## THE SUPPLIANTS

And in the pool of darkling purple hue  
Plunge thou the woe that comes in swarthy barque.

### ANTISTROPHE I

Look on the women's cause ;  
Recall the ancient tale,  
Of one whom 'Thou did'st love in time of old,  
The mother of our race :  
Remember it, O Thou  
Who did'st on Io lay thy mystic touch.  
We boast that we are come  
Of consecrated land the habitants, 520  
And from this land by lineage high descended.

### STROPHE II

Now to the ancient track,  
Our mother's, I have passed,  
'The flowery meadow-land where she was watched,—  
'The pastures of the herd,  
Whence Io, by the stinging gadfly driven,  
Flees, of her sense bereft,  
Passing through many tribes of mortal men ;  
And then by Fate's decree  
Crossing the billowy straits,  
On either side she leaves a continent.<sup>1</sup> 540

### ANTISTROPHE II

Now through the Asian land  
She hastens o'er and o'er,  
Right through the Phrygian fields where feed the  
flocks ;  
And passes 'Teuthras' fort,

<sup>1</sup> Comp. the narrative as given in *Prometheus Bound*, vv. 660,  
*et seq.*

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Owned by the Mysians,<sup>1</sup> and the Lydian plains ;  
And o'er Kilikian hills,  
And those of far Pamphylia rushing on,  
By ever-flowing streams,  
On to the deep, rich lands,  
And Aphrodite's home in wheat o'erflowing.<sup>2</sup>

### STROPHE III

And so she cometh, as that herdsman winged 550  
Pierces with sharpest sting,  
To holy plain all forms of life sustaining,  
Fields that are fed from snows,<sup>3</sup>  
Which Typhon's monstrous strength has traversed,<sup>4</sup>  
And unto Neilos' streams,  
By sickly taint untouched,<sup>5</sup>  
Still maddened with her toil of ignominy,  
By torturing stings driven on, great Hera's frenzied  
slave.

<sup>1</sup> 'Teuthras' fort, or Teuthrania, is described by Strabo (xii. p. 571) as lying between the Hellespont and Mount Sipylus, in Magnesia.

<sup>2</sup> Kypros, as dedicated to the worship of Aphrodite, and famous for its wine, and oil, and corn.

<sup>3</sup> The question, what caused the mysterious exceptional inundations of the Nile, occupied, as we see from Herodotos (ii. c. 19-27), the minds of the Greeks. Of the four theories which the historian discusses, Æschylos adopts that which referred it to the melting of the snows on the mountains of central Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Typhon, the mythical embodiment of the power of evil, was fabled to have wandered over Egypt, seeking the body of Osiris. Isis, to baffle him, placed coffins in all parts of Egypt, all empty but the one which contained the body.

<sup>5</sup> The fame of the Nile for the purity of its water, after the earthy matter held in solution had been deposited, seems to have been as great in the earliest periods of its history as it is now.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

### ANTISTROPHE III

And those who then the lands inhabited,  
Quivered with pallid fear, 560  
That filled their soul at that unwonted marvel,  
Seeing that monstrous shape,  
The human joined with brute,  
Half heifer, and half form of woman fair :<sup>1</sup>  
And sore amazed were they.  
Who was it then that soothed  
Poor Io, wandering in her sore affright,  
Driven on, and ever on, by gadfly's maddening sting :

### STROPHE IV

Zeus, Lord of endless time  
[Was seen All-working then ;]  
He, even He, for by his sovereign might 570  
That works no ill, was she from evil freed ;  
And by his breath divine  
She findeth rest, and weeps in floods of tears  
Her sorrowing shame away ;  
And with new burden big,  
Not falsely 'Zeus-born' named,  
She bare a son that grew in faultless growth,

### ANTISTROPHE IV

Prosperous through long, long years ;  
And so the whole land shouts with one accord,  
"Lo, a race sprung from him, the Lord of life,  
In very deed, Zeus-born !

<sup>1</sup> Io was represented as a woman with a heifer's head, and was probably a symbolic representation of the moon, with her crescent horns. Sometimes the transformation is described (as in v. 294) in words which imply a more thorough change.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Who else had checked the plagues that Hera sent ? ”  
This is the work of Zeus :  
And speaking of our race  
That sprang from Epaphos  
As such, thou would'st not fail to hit the mark.

### STROPHE V

Which of the Gods could I with right invoke  
As doing juster deeds ?  
He is our Father, author of our life,  
The King whose right hand worketh all his will,  
Our line's great author, in his counsels deep  
Recording things of old,  
Directing all his plans, the great work-master, Zeus.

### ANTISTROPHE V

For not as subject hastening at the beck  
Of strength above his own,<sup>1</sup>  
Reigns He subordinate to mightier powers ;  
Nor does He pay his homage from below,  
While One sits throned in majesty above ;<sup>2</sup>  
Act is for him as speech,  
To hasten what his teeming mind resolves.

590

### *Re-enter* DANAOS

*Dan.* Be of good cheer, my children. All goes well  
With those who dwell here, and the people's voice  
Hath passed decrees full, firm, irrevocable.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps—

“ For not as subject sitting 'neath the sway  
Of strength above his own.”

<sup>2</sup> The passage takes its place among the noblest utterances of a faith passing above the popular polytheism to the thought of one sovereign Will ruling and guiding all things, as Will—without effort, in the calmness of a power irresistible.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Chor.* Hail, aged sire, that tell'st me right good news!  
But say with what intent the vote hath passed,  
And on which side the people's hands prevail.

*Dan.* The Argives have decreed without division,  
So that my aged mind grew young again; 600  
For in full congress, with their right hands raised  
Rustled the air as they decreed their vote  
That we should sojourn in their land as free,  
Free from arrest, and with asylum rights;  
And that no native here nor foreigner  
Should lead us off; and, should he venture force,  
That every citizen who gave not help  
Dishonoured should be driven to exile forth.  
Such counsel giving, the Pelasgian King 610  
Gained their consent, proclaiming that great wrath  
Of Zeus the God of suppliants ne'er would let  
The city wax in fatness,—warning them  
That double guilt<sup>1</sup> upon the State would come,  
Touching at once both guests and citizens,  
The food and sustenance of sore disease  
That none could heal. And then the Argive host,  
Hearing these things, decreed by show of hands,  
Not waiting for the herald's proclamation,  
So it should be. They heard, indeed, the crowd  
Of those Pelasgi, all the winning speech,  
The well-turned phrases cunning to persuade;  
But it was Zeus that brought the end to pass.

*Chor.* Come then, come, let us speak for Argives  
Prayers that are good for good deeds done; 620  
Zeus, who o'er all strangers watches,  
May He regard with his praise and favour

<sup>1</sup> Double, as involving a sin against the laws of hospitality, so far as the suppliants were strangers—a sin against the laws of kindred, so far as they might claim by descent the rights of citizenship.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

The praise that comes from the lips of strangers,  
\*And guide in all to a faultless issue.

### STROPHE I

*Half-Chor. A.* Now, now, at last, ye Gods of Zeus  
begotten,<sup>1</sup>  
Hear, as I pour my prayers upon their race,  
That ne'er may this Pelasgic city raise  
From out its flames the joyless cry of War,  
War, that in other fields  
Reapeth his human crop:  
For they have mercy shown,  
And passed their kind decree, 631  
Pitying this piteous flock, the suppliants of great Zeus.

### ANTISTROPHE I

They did not take their stand with men 'gainst women  
Casting dishonour on their plea for help,  
\*But looked to Him who sees and works from heaven,  
\*Full hard to war with. Yea, what house could bear  
To see Him on its roof  
Casting pollution there?<sup>2</sup>  
Sore vexing there he sits.  
Yes, they their kin revere,  
Suppliants of holiest Zeus; 631  
Therefore with altars pure shall they the Gods delight.

<sup>1</sup> If, as has been conjectured, the tragedy was written with a view to the alliance between Argos and Athens, made in B.C. 461, this choral ode must have been the centre, if not of the dramatic, at all events of the political interest of the play.

<sup>2</sup> The image is that of a bird of evil omen, perched upon the roof, and defiling the house, while it uttered its boding cries.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

### STROPHE II

Therefore from faces by our boughs o'ershadowed<sup>1</sup>  
Let prayers ascend in enfulous eagerness :  
    Ne'er may dark pestilence  
    This State of men bereave ;  
    May no fierce party strife  
Pollute these plains with native carcasses ;  
    And may the bloom of youth  
    Be with them still uncropt ;  
And ne'er may Aphrodite's paramour,  
    Ares the scourge of men,  
    Mow down their blossoms fair !

650

### ANTISTROPHE II

And let the altars tended by the old  
\*Blaze with the gifts of men with hoary hairs ;  
    So may the State live on  
    In full prosperity !  
    Let them great Zeus adore,  
The strangers' God, the one Supreme on high,  
    By venerable law  
    Ordering the course of fate.  
And next we pray that ever more and more  
    Earth may her tribute bear,  
And Artemis as Hecate preside<sup>2</sup>  
    O'er woman's travail-pangs.

660

### STROPHE III

Let no destroying strife come on, invading  
    This city to lay waste,

<sup>1</sup> 'The suppliants' boughs, so held as to shade the face from view.

<sup>2</sup> The name of Hecate connected Artemis as, on the one side, with the unseen world of Hades, so, on the other, with child-birth, and the purifications that followed on it.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Setting in fierce array  
War, with its fruit of tears,  
Lyreless and danceless all,  
And cry of people's wrath ;  
And may the swarm of plagues,  
Loathly and foul to see,  
Abide far off from these our citizens,  
And that Lykeian king, may He be found  
Benignant to our youth !<sup>1</sup>

### ANTISTROPHE III

And Zeus, may He, by his supreme decree,  
Make the earth yield her fruits  
Through all the seasons round,  
And grant a plenteous brood  
Of herds that roam the fields !  
May Heaven all good gifts pour,  
And may the voice of song  
Ascend o'er altar shrines,  
Unmarred by sounds of ill !  
And let the voice that loves with lyre to blend  
Go forth from lips of blameless holiness,  
In accents of great joy !

370

### STROPHE IV

\* And may the rule in which the people share  
Keep the State's functions as in perfect peace,

<sup>1</sup> The name of Lykeian, originally, perhaps, simply representing Apollo as the God of Light, came afterwards to be associated with the might of destruction (the Wolf-destroyer) and the darts of pestilence and sudden death. The prayer is therefore that he, the Destroyer, may hearken to the suppliants, and spare the people for whom they pray.



## THE SUPPLIANTS

E'en that which sways the crowd,  
\*Which sways the commonwealth,  
By counsels wise and good ;  
And to the strangers and the sojourners  
May they grant rights that rest on compacts sure,  
Ere War is roused to arms,  
So that no trouble come !

680

### ANTISTROPHE IV

And the great Gods who o'er this country watch,  
May they adore them in the land They guard,  
With rites of sacrifice,  
And troops with laurel boughs,  
As did our sires of old !  
For thus to honour those who gave us life,  
This stands as one of three great laws on high,<sup>1</sup>  
Written as fixed and firm,  
The laws of Right revered.  
*Dan.* I praise these seemly prayers, dear children  
mine.

690

But fear ye not, if I your father speak  
Words that are new, and all unlooked-for by you ;  
For from this station to the suppliant given  
I see the ship ; too clear to be mistaken  
The swelling sails, the bulwark's coverings,  
And prow with eyes that scan the onward way,<sup>2</sup>  
But too obedient to the steerman's helm,  
Being, as it is, unfriendly. And the men  
Who sail in her with swarthy limbs are seen,

<sup>1</sup> The "three great laws" were those ascribed to Triptolemos, "to honour parents, to worship the Gods with the fruits of the earth, to hurt neither man nor beast."

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian ships, like those of many other Eastern countries, had eyes (the eyes of Osiris, as they were called) painted on their bows.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

In raiment white conspicuous. And I see 700  
Full clear the other ships that come to help ;  
And this as leader, putting in to shore,  
Furling its sails, is rowed with equal stroke.  
'Tis yours, with mood of calm and steadfast soul,  
To face the fact, and not to slight the Gods.  
And I will come with friends and advocates ;  
For herald, it may be, or embassy,  
May come, and wish to seize and bear you off,  
Grasping their prey. But nought of this shall be ;  
Fear ye not them. It were well done, however,  
If we should linger in our help, this succour 710  
In no wise to forget. Take courage then ;  
In their own time and at the appointed day,  
Whoever slights the Gods shall pay for it.

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* I fear, my father, since the swift-winged ships  
Are come, and very short the time that's left.  
A shuddering anguish makes me sore afraid,  
Lest small the profit of my wandering flight.

I faint, my sire, for fear.

*Dan.* My children, since the Argives' vote is passed,  
Take courage : they will fight for thee, I know. 720

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* Hateful and wanton are Ægyptos' sons,  
Insatiable of conflict, and I speak  
To one who knows them. They in timbered ships,  
Dark-eyed, have sailed in wrath that hits its mark,  
With great and swarthy host.

*Dan.* Yet many they shall find whose arms are tanned  
In the full scorching of the noontide heat.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A side-thrust, directed by the poet, who had fought at Marathon, against the growing effeminacy of the Athenian youth,

## THE SUPPLIANTS

### STROPHE II

*Chor.* Leave me not here alone, I pray thee, father !  
Alone, a woman is as nought, and war  
Is not for her. Of over-subtle mind,  
And subtle counsel in their souls impure, 739  
Like ravens, e'en for altars caring not,—  
Such, such in soul are they.

*Dan.* That would work well indeed for us, my  
children,  
Should they be foes to Gods as unto thee.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* No reverence for these tridents or the shrines  
Of Gods, my father, will restrain their hands :  
Full stout of heart, of godless mood unblest,  
Fed to the full, and petulant as dogs,  
And for the voice of high Gods caring not,—  
Such, such in soul are they.

*Dan.* Nay, the tale runs that wolves prevail o'er  
dogs ; 740  
And byblos fruit excels not ear of corn.<sup>1</sup>

*Chor.* But since their minds are as the minds of  
brutes,  
Restless and vain, we must beware of force.

many of whom were learning to shrink from all activity and exposure that might spoil their complexions. Comp. Plato, *Phædros*, p. 239.

<sup>1</sup> The saying is somewhat dark, but the meaning seems to be that if the "dogs" of Egypt are strong, the "wolves" of Argos are stronger ; that the wheat on which the Hellenes lived gave greater strength to limbs and sinew than the "byblos fruit" on which the Egyptian soldiers and sailors habitually lived. Some writers, however, have seen in the last line, rendered—

"The byblos fruit not always bears full ear,"  
a proverb like the English,

"There's many a slip  
'Twixt the cup and the lip."

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Dan.* Not rapid is the getting under weigh  
Of naval squadron, nor their anchoring,  
Nor the safe putting into shore with cables.  
Nor have the shepherds of swift ships quick trust  
In anchor-fastenings, most of all, as now,  
When coming to a country havenless ;  
And when the sun has yielded to the night,  
That night brings travail to a pilot wise, 750  
[Though it be calm and all the waves sleep still ;]  
So neither can this army disembark  
Before the ship is safe in anchorage.  
And thou beware lest in thy panic fear  
Thou slight the Gods whom thou hast called to help.  
The city will not blame your messenger,  
Old though he be, being young in clear-voiced thought.  
*Exit*

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Ah, me ! thou land of jutting promontory  
Which justly all revere,  
What lies before us ? Where in Apian land  
Shall we a refuge find,  
If still there be dark hiding anywhere ?  
Ah ! that I were as smoke  
That riseth full and black  
Nigh to the clouds of Zeus, 760  
Or soaring up on high invisible,  
Like dust that vanishes,  
Pass out of being with no help from wings !

### ANTISTROPHE I

'E'en so the ill admits not now of flight ;  
My heart in dark gloom throbs ;  
My father's work as watcher brings me low ;  
I faint for very fear,

## THE SUPPLIANTS

And I would fain find noose that bringeth death,  
In twisted cordage hung,  
Before the man I loathe  
Draws near this flesh of mine :  
Sooner than that may Hades rule o'er me  
Sleeping the sleep of death !

770

### STROPHE II

Ah, might I find a place in yon high vault,  
Where the rain-clouds are passing into snow,  
Or lonely precipice  
Whose summit none can see,  
Rock where the vulture haunts,  
Witness for me of my abysmal fall,  
Before the marriage that will pierce my heart  
Becomes my dreaded doom !

### ANTISTROPHE II

I shrink not from the thought of being the prey  
Of dogs and birds that haunt the country round ;  
For death shall make me free  
From ills all lamentable :  
Yea, let death rather come  
Than the worse doom of hated marriage-bed !  
What other refuge now remains for me  
That marriage to avert ?

780

### STROPHE III

Yea, to the Gods raise thou  
Cloud-piercing, wailing cry  
Of songs and litanies,  
Prevailing, working freedom out for me :  
And thou, O Father, look,  
Look down upon the strife,

790

## THE SUPPLIANTS

With glance of wrath against our enemies  
From eyes that see the right ;  
With pity look on us thy suppliants,  
O Lord of Earth, O Zeus omnipotent !

### ANTISTROPHE III

For lo ! Ægyptos' house,  
In pride intolerable,  
O'er-masculine in mood,  
Pursuing me in many a winding course,  
Poor wandering fugitive,  
With loud and wild desires,  
Seek in their frenzied violence to seize :  
But thine is evermore  
The force that turns the balance of the scale :  
What comes to mortal men apart from Thee ?

800

Ah ! ah ! ah ! ah !  
\*Here on the land behold the ravisher  
Who comes on us by sea !  
\*Ah, may'st thou perish, ravisher, ere thou  
Hast stopped or landed here !  
\*I utter cry of wailing loud and long,  
\*I see them work the prelude of their crimes,  
Their crimes of violence.

810

Ah ! ah ! Ah me !  
Haste in your flight for help !  
The mighty ones are waxing fat and proud,  
By sea and land alike intolerable.  
Be thou, O King, our bulwark and defence !

*Enter Herald of the sons of ÆGYPTOS, advancing to  
the daughters of DANAOS*

*Her.* Haste, haste with all your speed unto the  
barque.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Chor.* Tearing of hair, yea, tearing now will come,  
And print of nails in flesh,  
And smiting off of heads,  
With murderous stream of blood.

*Her.* Haste, haste ye, to that barque that yonder  
lies,  
Ye wretches, curse on you.

### STROPHE I

*Chor.* Would thou had'st met thy death  
Where the salt waves wildly surge,  
Thou with thy lordly pride,  
In nail-compacted ship :

\*Lo ! they will smite thee, weltering in thy blood, <sup>820</sup>  
\*And drive thee to thy barque.

*Her.* I bid you cease perforce, the cravings wild  
Of mind to madness given.

Ho there ! what ho ! I say ; 821  
Give up those seats, and hasten to the ship :  
I reverence not what this State honoureth.

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Chor.* Ah, I may ne'er again  
Behold the stream where graze the goodly kine,  
Nourished and fed by which <sup>1</sup>  
The blood of cattle waxes strong and full !  
\*As with a native's right,  
\*And one of old descent,  
I keep, old man, my seat, my seat, I say.

<sup>1</sup> The words recall the vision of the "seven well-favoured kine and fat-fleshed," which "came out of the river," as Pharaoh dreamed (Gen. xli. 1, 2), and which were associated so closely with the fertility which it ordinarily produced through the whole extent of the valley of the Nile.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Her.* Nay, in a ship, a ship thou shalt soon go, 840  
With or without thy will,  
By force, I say, by force :  
Come, come, provoke not evils terrible,  
Falling by these my hands.

### STROPHE II

*Chor.* Ah me ! ah me !  
Would thou may'st perish with no hand to help,  
Crossing the sea's wide plain,  
In wanderings far and wide,  
Where Sarpedonian sand-bank <sup>1</sup> spreads its length,  
Driven by the sweeping blasts !

*Her.* Sob thou, and howl, and call upon the 850  
Gods :  
Thou shalt not 'scape that barque from Ægypt come,  
'Though thou should'st pour a bitterer strain of grief.

### ANTISTROPHE II

*Chor.* Woe ! woe ! Ah woe ! ah woe,  
For this foul wrong ! 'Thou utterest fearful things ;  
\*Thou art too bold and insolent of speech.  
\*May mighty Nile that reared thee turn away  
Thy wanton pride and lust  
That we behold it not !

*Her.* I bid you go to yon ship double-prowed,<sup>2</sup>  
With all your speed. Let no one lag behind ; 860  
But little shall my grasp your ringlets spare.  
[*Seizes on the leader of the Suppliants*

<sup>1</sup> Two dangerous low headlands seem to have been known by this name, one on the coast of Kilikia, the other on that of the Thracian Chersonese.

<sup>2</sup> No traces of ships of this structure are found in Egyptian art ; but, if the reading be right, it implies the existence of boats of some kind, so built that they could be steered from either end.



## THE SUPPLIANTS

### STROPHE III

*Chor.* Ah me ! my father, ah !  
The help of holiest statues turns to woe ;  
    He leads me to the sea,  
    With motion spider-like,  
Or like a dream, a dark and dismal dream,  
    Ah woe ! ah woe ! ah woe !  
O mother Earth ! O Earth ! O mother mine !  
    Avert that cry of fear,  
O Zeus, thou king ! O son of mother Earth !  
*Her.* Nay, I fear not the Gods they worship here  
They did not rear nor lead me up to age. 57

### ANTISTROPHE III

*Chor.* Near me he rages now,  
    .  
    .  
    .  
    .  
    .  
    .  
That biped snake,  
And like a viper bites me by the foot.  
    Oh, woe is me ! woe ! woe !  
O mother Earth ! O Earth ! O mother mine !  
    Avert that cry of fear,  
O Zeus, thou king ! O son of mother Earth !  
*Her.* If some one yield not, and to yon ship go,  
The hand that tears her tunic will not pity.

### STROPHE IV

*Chor.* Ho ! rulers of the State !  
    Ye princes ! I am seized.  
*Her.* It seems, since ye are slow to hear my word,  
That I shall have to drag you by the hair.

### ANTISTROPHE IV

*Chor.* We are undone, undone !  
We suffer, prince, unlooked-for outrages.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Her.* Full many princes, heirs of great Ægyptos,  
Ye soon shall see. Take courage ; ye shall have  
No cause to speak of anarchy as there.

*Enter KING followed by his Bodyguard*

*King.* Ho there ! What dost thou ? and with  
what intent  
Dost thou so outrage this Pelasgic land ?  
Dost think thou comest to a town of women ? 890  
Too haughty thou, a stranger 'gainst Hellenes,  
And, sinning much, hast nothing done aright.

*Her.* What sin against the right have I then done ?

*King.* First, thou know'st not how stranger-guest  
should act.

*Her.* How so ? When I, but finding what I  
lost . . .

*King.* Whom among us dost thou then patrons call ?

*Her.* Hermes the Searcher, chiefest patron mine.<sup>1</sup>

*King.* Thou, Gods invoking, honourest not the  
Gods.

*Her.* The Gods of Neilos are the Gods I worship.

*King.* Ours then are nought, if I thy meaning  
catch. 900

*Her.* These girls I'll lead, if no one rescues them.

*King.* Lay hand on them, and soon thou'lt pay the  
cost.

*Her.* I hear a word in no wise hospitable.

*King.* Who rob the Gods I welcome not as guests.

<sup>1</sup> Hermes, the guardian deity of heralds, is here described by the epithet which marked him out as being also the patron of detectives. Every stranger arriving in a Greek port had to place himself under a *proxenos* or patron of some kind. The herald, having no *proxenos* among the citizens, appeals to his patron deity.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*Her.* I then will tell Ægyptos' children this.

*King.* This threat is all unheeded in my mind.

*Her.* But that I, knowing all, may speak it plain,  
(For it is meet a herald should declare  
Each matter clearly,) what am I to say?  
By whom have I been robbed of that fair band  
Of women whom I claim as kindred? Nay, 910  
But it is Ares that shall try this cause,  
And not with witnesses, nor money down,  
Settling the matter, but there first must fall  
Full many a soldier, and of many a life  
The rending in convulsive agony.

*King.* Why should I tell my name? In time thou'lt  
know it,  
Thou and thy fellow-travellers. But these maidens,  
With their consent and free choice of their wills,  
Thou may'st lead off, if godly speech persuade them:  
But this decree our city's men have made  
With one consent, that we to force yield not  
This company of women. Here the nail 920  
Is driven tight home to keep its place full firm;<sup>1</sup>  
These things are written not on tablets only,  
[Nor signed and sealed in folds of byblos-rolls;]  
Thou hear'st them clearly from a tongue that speaks  
With full, free speech. Away, away, I say:  
And with all speed from out my presence haste.

*Her.* It is thy will then a rash war to wage:  
May strength and victory on our males attend!

[*Exit*

<sup>1</sup> The words refer to the custom of nailing decrees, proclamations, treaties, and the like, engraved on metal or marble, upon the walls of temples or public buildings. Traces of the same idea may possibly be found in the promise to Eliakim that he shall be "as a nail in a sure place" (Isa. xxii. 23), in the thanksgiving of Ezra that God had given His people "a nail in his holy place" (Ezra ix. 8).

## THE SUPPLIANTS

*King.* Nay, thou shalt find the dwellers of this  
land

Are also males, and drink not draughts of ale 930  
From barley brewed.<sup>1</sup> [*To the Suppliants.*] But ye,  
and your attendants,

Take courage, go within the fenced city,  
Shut in behind its bulwark deep of towers ;  
Yea, many houses to the State belong,  
And I a palace own not meanly built,  
If ye prefer to live with many others  
In ease and plenty : or if that suits better,  
Ye may inhabit separate abodes.

Of these two offers that which pleases best  
Choose for yourselves, and I as your protector, 940  
And all our townsmen, will defend the pledge  
Which our decree has given you. Why wait'st thou  
For any better authorised than these ?

*Chor.* For these thy good deeds done may'st thou  
in good,

All good, abound, great chief of the Pelasgi !

But kindly send to us

Our father Danaos, brave and true of heart,  
To counsel and direct.

His must the first decision be where we  
Should dwell, and where to find

A kindly home ; for ready is each one  
To speak his word of blame 'gainst foreigners. 950

But may all good be ours !

And so with fair repute and speech of men,

Free from all taint of wrath,

So place yourselves, dear handmaids, in the land,

<sup>1</sup> A. before, the bread of the Hellenes was praised to the disparagement of the "byblos fruit" of Egypt, so here their wine to that of the Egyptian beer, which was the ordinary drink of the lower classes.

## THE SUPPLIANTS

As Danaos hath for each of us assigned  
Dowry of handmaid slaves.

*Enter DANAOS followed by Soldiers*

*Dan.* My children, to the Argives ye should pray,  
And sacrifice, and full libations pour,  
As to Olympian Gods, for they have proved,  
With one consent, deliverers: and they heard  
\*All that I did towards those cousins there, 260  
\*Those lovers hot and bitter. And they gave  
To me as followers these that bear the spear,  
That I might have my meed of honour due,  
And might not die by an assassin's hand  
A death unlooked-for, and thus leave the land  
A weight of guilt perpetual: and 'tis fit  
'That one who meets such kindness should return,  
\*From his heart's depths, a nobler gratitude;  
And add ye this to all already written,  
Your father's many maxims of true wisdom,  
'That we, though strangers, may in time be known; 270  
For as to aliens each man's tongue is apt  
For evil, and spreads slander thoughtlessly;  
But ye, I charge you, see ye shame me not,  
With this your life's bloom drawing all men's eyes.  
The goodly vintage is full hard to watch,  
All men and beasts make fearful havoc of it,  
Nay, birds that fly, and creeping things of earth;  
And Kypris offers fruitage, dropping ripe,  
\*As prey to wandering lust, nor lets it stay;<sup>1</sup>  
And on the goodly comeliness of maidens 280  
Each passer-by, o'ercome with hot desire,

<sup>1</sup> The words present a striking parallelism to the erotic imagery of the *Song of Solomon*: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil our vines, for our vines have tender grapes" (ii. 15).

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Darts forth the amorous arrows of the eye.  
And therefore let us suffer nought of this,  
Through which our ship has ploughed such width of sea,  
Such width of trouble; neither let us work  
Shame to ourselves, and pleasure to our foes.  
This two-fold choice of home is open to you :  
[Pelagos offers his, the city theirs,]  
To dwell rent-free. Full easy terms are these :  
Only, I charge you, keep your father's precepts,  
Prizing as more than life your chastity. 990

*Chor.* May the high Gods that on Olympus dwell  
Bless us in all things; but for this our vintage  
Be of good cheer, my father; for unless  
The counsels of the Gods work strange device,  
I will not leave my spirit's former path.

### STROPHE I

*Semi-Chor. A.* Go then and make ye glad the high  
Gods, blessed for ever,  
Those who rule our towns, and those who watch over  
our city,  
And they who dwell by the stream of Erasinus ancient.<sup>1</sup>

*Semi Chor. B.* And ye, companions true,  
Take up your strain of song. 1000  
Let praise attend this city of Pelagos;  
Let us no more, no more adore the mouths of Neilos  
With these our hymns of praise;

### ANTISTROPHE I

*Semi-Chor. A.* Nay, but the rivers here that pour  
calm streams through our country,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Erasinus was supposed to rise in Arcadia, in Mount Stymphalos, to disappear below the earth, and to come to sight again in Argolis.

<sup>2</sup> In this final choral ode of the *Suppliants*, as in that of the *Seven against Thebes*, we have the phenomenon of the division of

## THE SUPPLIANTS

Parents of many a son, making glad the soil of our  
meadows,  
With wide flood rolling on, in full and abounding  
richness.

*Semi-Chor. B.* And Artemis the chaste,  
 May she behold our band  
 With pity ; ne'er be marriage rites enforcèd  
 On us by Kythereia : those who hate us,  
 Let that ill prize be theirs.

## STROPHE II

*Semi-Chor. A.* Not that our kindly strain does slight  
to Kypris immortal ;  
For she, together with Hera, as nearest to Zeus is  
mighty,  
A goddess of subtle thoughts, she is honoured in mys-  
teries solemn.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, as associates too with that their  
mother beloved,<sup>1020</sup>  
Are fair Desire and Suasion,<sup>1</sup> whose pleading no man  
can gainsay,  
Yea, to sweet Concord too Aphrodite's power is en-  
trusted,  
\*And the whispering paths of the Loves.

the Chorus, hitherto united, into two sections of divergent thought and purpose. Semi-Chorus A. remains steadfast in its purpose of perpetual virginity; Semi-Chorus B. relents, and is ready to accept wedlock.

<sup>1</sup> The two names were closely connected in the local worship of Athens, the temples of Aphrodite and Peitho (Suasion) standing at the south-west angle of the Acropolis. If any special purpose is to be traced in the invocation, we may see it in the poet's desire to bring out the nobler, more ethical side of Aphrodite's attributes, in contrast with the growing tendency to look on her as simply the patroness of brutal lust.

# THE SUPPLIANTS

## ANTISTROPHE II

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yet am I sore afraid of the ship that  
chases us wanderers,  
Of terrible sorrows, and wars that are bloody and hate-  
ful ;

\*Why else have they had fair gale for this their eager  
pursuing ? 1030

*Semi-Chor. B.* Whate'er is decreed of us, I know  
that it needs must happen ;  
The mighty purpose of Zeus, unfailing, admits no  
transgression :

\*May this fate come to us, as to many women before  
us,

\*Fate of marriage and spouse !

## STROPHE III

*Semi-Chor. A.* Ah, may great Zeus avert  
From me all marriage with Ægyptos' sons !

*Semi-Chor. B.* Nay, all will work for good.

*Semi-Chor. A.* Thou glozest that which will no  
glozing bear. 1040

*Semi-Chor. B.* And thou know'st not what future  
comes to us.

## ANTISTROPHE III

*Semi-Chor. A.* How can I read the mind  
Of mightiest Zeus, to sight all fathomless ?

*Semi-Chor. B.* Well-tempered be thy speech !

*Semi-Chor. A.* What mood of calmness wilt thou  
school me in ?

*Semi-Chor. B.* Be not o'er-rash in what concerns  
the Gods.



## THE SUPPLIANTS

### STROPHE IV

*Semi-Chor. A.* Nay, may our great king Zeus avert  
that marriage  
With husbands whom we hate,  
E'en He who, touching her with healing hand,  
Freed Io from her pain,  
Putting an end from all her wanderings,  
Working with kindly force !

1050

### ANTISTROPHE IV

*Semi-Chor. B.* And may He give the victory to  
women !  
I choose the better part,  
Though mixed with ill ; and that the trial end  
Justly, as I have prayed,  
By means of subtle counsels which God gives  
To liberate from ills.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The play, as acted, formed part of a trilogy, and the next play, the *Danaids*, probably contained the sequel of the story, the acceptance by the Suppliants of the sons of *Aegyptos* in marriage, the plot of Danaos for the destruction of the bridegrooms on the wedding night, and the execution of the deed of blood by all but *Hypermnestra*.













